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The Superlative Christianity of the Crucified Man

The Religion for Our Time

by

W. E. Goode

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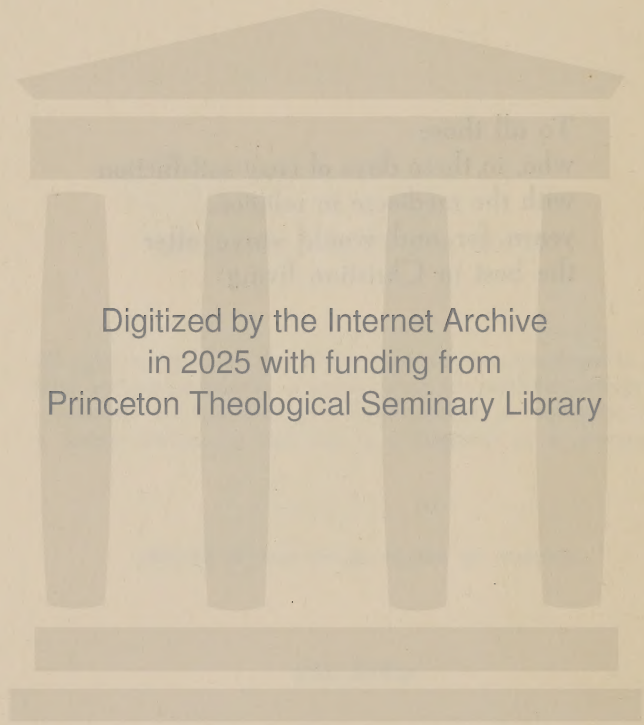
To all those
who, in these days of easy satisfaction
with the mediocre in religion,
yearn for and would strive after
the best in Christian living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Preface

Study of the New Testament brought me early to the conviction that there is a type of Christian living superior to anything I could claim for myself or find in others about me. Paul, better than anyone save our Lord himself, seems to me to have exemplified just this kind of Christianity. The more I have studied his life, the more profoundly convinced I have become that his sort of Christianity, compared to what we ourselves exemplify or see exemplified in our time, must be called *superlative Christianity*.

What sort of Christianity is ours? If we appraise it according to the old grammatical system of adjectives—*positive, comparative, superlative*—how shall we characterize our kind of Christian living? How much of it can be duly labeled as positive? A great deal of the so-called Christianity of our day is not positive in profession or practice. The part that is real and true is, to be sure, positive. Some of it is in the comparative degree. Placed side by side with the sort of Christianity that has been lived through the centuries, it can be so rated. But rarely can anything better be said of it.

There have been some, however, whose Christianity must be called superlative. At their head, and next to our Lord in the kingdom of God, stands Paul. And down the centuries there have been a few others who have attained this standard. In our day there can be found one such person now and then, here and there. But in our modern world nothing has been made more clear than the need of many more who would strive for a higher type of Christian living.

The first half of the twentieth century, with its experiences and conditions, national and worldwide, heavily underscores this need. This period of unparalleled progress, of marvelous discoveries and inventions, of the amassing of great wealth, of unprecedented general and specialized education, has been marked by two world wars, with a third impending, and the worst depression in modern history, if not of all time. Verily we have not learned how to use aright our powers and our possessions. The threat to civilization as we know it in the new weapons and means of destruction and death, if a third world war should break upon us, shows how imperative is the need of some influence in our lives that will bring spiritual growth into balance with material progress and intellectual development, and produce spiritual controls that will enable us to make not only the right but the best use of the powers and possessions which our endeavors in the material realm and our achievements in the mental realm have produced in such abundance. What could and would release this influence in the world, and guard and guarantee mankind against such wars and such down-dips of material and moral depression, better than a religion like that which Paul lived? So in these pages I undertake to present what seems to me to be the quintessence of Paul's type of Christian living.

Some have been saying these last years that we need to go *back of* Paul to Jesus. Our need is better expressed perhaps by a change of prepositions—we need to go *back through* Paul to Jesus. We of the present day, it is likely, would thus more quickly come closer to our Lord. Who can say that anything would be better for the modern world than a return to the religion of Jesus as interpreted by Paul in his life and his teaching? At least we would then have a type of Christianity vastly superior to that to which we are accustomed in this day. And who can doubt that such a Christianity would save us even now? "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12).[1]

It will be evident to the reader that the author has written from the viewpoint of the old faith that has stood the test of the centuries. These pages have come out of a settled belief that

Jesus is *the* Son of God and is therefore able to be *the* Saviour of men, and worthy to be their Lord.

The vindication of the old faith is in the production of character like that of Paul's and the type of Christian living he exemplified. His character and life were founded, it is quite clear, on his belief in Christ Jesus as the divine Saviour and Lord. Until the new faith, the belief of those who would excise the Book and reduce the Christ, produces a character that surpasses that of Paul's and a life that at least matches his in devotion to his Lord and unselfish service to men, it seems to the writer to be better to hold to the Old Faith. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Not only does Paul in his life give us the example *par excellence* of superlative Christianity, but in his teaching he shows us how we may approach nearer than we have hitherto in our lives this high type of Christian living. This he does in his pictures of the crucified man in Romans and Galatians. The composite picture of the crucified man as Paul presents him we shall make the introduction to this little volume. We shall then try to show how the marks of superlative Christianity fit into and fill out the composite picture so that it becomes a complete portrait. Our hope is that it may thus be seen that the crucified man is the superlative Christian. Finally, we shall endeavor to indicate what is the goal on earth and the end in heaven of the superlative Christianity of the crucified man.

Introduction:

The Crucified Man

"I am crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20).

When the suggestive phrase, "the crucified man" is used, one thinks perhaps of the Man Who was nailed to the cross. But the Christ is not the man here meant. When the impressive words "I am crucified with Christ" are quoted, one thinks certainly of Paul, who wrote these words and whose life comes as near to justifying the claim they make as the life of any man who has lived on this earth. But however closely Paul, in his life as well as in his words, may be connected with the thought, he is not the man now in mind. The man here meant is the man who has so lost himself in love and devotion to his Lord that his fellow men, looking on his daily life, must say of him, "He is crucified with Christ; he is a crucified man."

Who knows where lives such a man today? Who would be able to recognize him in our modern life? Who is well enough acquainted with him, or his picture, so as not to mistake him if he should appear? It is the picture of such a man that is here presented. Paul has drawn his picture four times, once in Romans and three times in Galatians. From the four passages we have the composite picture of the crucified man.

I

The first picture Paul draws is of a crucifixion that is fundamental. "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6). The phrases "our old man" and "the body of sin" make clear Paul's realization of how fundamental is this initial crucifixion. The old sinful nature must be crucified and its dominion destroyed. Weymouth's translation has "our sinful nature" in the place of "the body of sin."

In two other places Paul uses the phrase "the old man": "That ye put off . . . the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts . . . and that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22ff). "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man which is revealed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Colossians 3:9f). By "the old man" he clearly means the original sinful nature, which must be crucified if one is to become the new creature in Christ.

Dean Inge, as quoted in the old *Literary Digest,* says, "The old man, the ego, the seed of selfishness," thus taking his stand, as the person commenting writes, "with all the moralists and religious teachers, including our Lord himself," and against the "psychoanalysts," with their "new-fangled theories" and "nauseous nonsense," to use the phrases of the dean, who goes on to say, "Paul talks of abolishing, starving, even of crucifying the old man. Was he a poor psychoanalyst or did he perhaps know the human heart?"

Taking into account all that has come to us by revelation and experience, we are wiser if we assume that Paul did know human nature, and that that nature, "as such and in all its parts in the unregenerate state is under the dominion of sin."[1] This dominion, Paul knew also, is such that it can be destroyed or done away with only by a crucifixion with Christ. Therefore he gives us the picture of our old man nailed to the cross. What a picture it is! Let him hang there! Let him die the death and, as Moffatt says, "free us from any further slavery to sin."

II

Three times in Galatians, Paul pictures the crucified man (2:20; 5:24; 6:14). For reasons that will appear obvious, these pictures are discussed in reverse order in this study.

Glance first at the picture Paul gives last in Galatians. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world" (6:14). The thought of the double crucifixion presented in this picture is worthy of primary emphasis. When the world found that Paul was crucified with Christ unto it, it despised and persecuted him, even as his Lord had foretold. "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). How truly his Lord had spoken Paul had already found out, as he shows in what he wrote to the Corinthians: "We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day" (I Corinthians 4:13).

But no more was Paul a crucified thing unto the world than the world was a crucified thing unto Paul. Not that he, as someone has pointed out, regarded the world as a useless thing, or a place to be abandoned to its wickedness, or upon which he might pour out his spite or hatred; rather, the world had lost its appeal to him and its power over him. What he says to the Philippians (3:8) shows his attitude to the world: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things."

The world crucified unto me and I unto the world! How the questions this picture raises need to cut through the coating of present-day worldliness to pierce to the hearts of professing Christians! Has this double crucifixion taken place in us and is it showing itself in our lives? Are we really crucified unto the world and the world unto us, or is it with most of us as it was in Wordsworth's day, more than a hundred years ago?

> The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
> Little we see in nature that is ours;
> We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon.[2]

III

Consider Paul's third picture of the crucified man, the second found in Galatians: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24 RSV). For true Christian living there is no crucifixion more essential than this. The evil passions and low desires of the flesh are utterly at variance with the high aspirations of the soul. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are of the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7f). Weymouth's translation of this passage is illuminating: "Thoughts shaped by the lower nature mean a state of enmity to God. They do not submit to God's law, and indeed cannot. Those who obey the lower nature cannot please God." These low passions and uncurbed desires quickly drag us down to the brute level. There can be no climbing up in the Christian way until they are crucified.

Nor are we left in ignorance as to what these passions and desires are. In the fifth chapter of Galatians they are listed. "The works of the flesh are manifest," Paul writes, and goes on to give the long list of them, where, side by side with idolatry, fornication, drunkenness, and sorcery, he puts enmities, strife, jealousies, envyings. These things and all their like must be nailed to the cross, for "they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Then he gives the list of the fruits of the spirit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." All Christians should study well the two lists Paul sets in contrast here, as the background of this picture of the crucified man. What truth there is in the lines of Lillian Lauferty!

Two spirits dwell in me,
And one would sport through all life's golden day,
Nor suffer any pain at all, but be a child at play.
It chooses joyous comrades and when their mirthtime ends,
It flits along to playmates new and calls these wasters friends.

It would not grow, for growth means pain.
To pay life's debts it thinks is vain.
But it would quaff and quaff again,
And hug as dearest treasure
The poison cup called pleasure.

Two spirits dwell in me.
And one would toil to some far-visioned height,
Nor spurn the bruising stones beneath because they give it might.
It welcomes trial, smiles on pain, and knows that past the grieving
It shall find relief and strength to grow beyond today's believing.
And should each budding friendship fail, until life's daytime ends,
It still would strive for worthiness to win more worthy friends.
It longs to bring some gift to life.
For this it bears the pruning knife,
Nor strives surcease to borrow
From kindly hand of sorrow.

Two spirits dwell in me,
And I can choose which I shall be.[3]

The mightiest battle which earth knows is the battle between these two spirits, the spirit of the flesh and the spirit of Christ. And the most glorious victory that earth witnesses is won when "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (RSV).

IV

The fourth picture of the crucified man—the first which Paul gives in Galatians, but the last presented here—is the great picture. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me." What a picture is here! How clear it is in all its lines! Little comment on it is needed. It is sufficient to repeat the substance of an outline someone has given us: first, we have a dead

man—"I am crucified": secondly, we have a live man—"nevertheless I live": thirdly, we have another man—"Christ lives in me."

The question was asked above if anyone could find the crucified man. It is now repeated directly to the reader. Could you find the man that is pictured in this great verse—a dead man who is yet alive, though not living his own life, but with Christ living in him? There is a better course than to go on a search for such a man. Let the world see in *you* the picture made a reality. Let the world find in *you* a life that has been crucified with Christ.

V

What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? It means the death of the old man of sin. It means the double crucifixion of the world unto self and self unto the world! It means nailing to the cross the flesh, with its evil possessions and desires. It means the ego on the cross and the Christ in the heart.

Many years ago the writer clipped an item entitled "A Millionaire Missionary." W. W. Borden, inheritor of millions, graduate of Yale University, trustee of the Moody Bible Institute, founder of the Yale Hope Mission, had decided to give his life to mission work in China. Gripped by a sense of the great need of the nations for the Gospel, a conviction which had come to him from a trip around the world on which he visited many mission fields, he set out to prepare himself to help meet that need. A few months later another item appeared, entitled "A Martyr Missionary." W. W. Borden had died of spinal meningitis in Cairo, Egypt, where he was preparing himself to enter upon his life's work of preaching the Gospel to the Mohammedans in China. The two paragraphs, laid side by side, said emphatically, "Crucified with Christ and unto the world."

Quite as many years ago a New York daily paper carried a column-length story under the headline "Pastor and Bride Begin Their Married Life Among Lepers." And the sub-head was: "Knowing They Can Never Return, They Sail for Afflicted Indian Colony." The story was of the embarkation of the young

couple as missionaries to a leper colony in India. Almost certain they would someday contract the disease themselves, and it was absolutely certain that they could never come back home again, yet as they embarked the young husband could say, "My wife and I are glad of this opportunity given us for usefulness in this field. We sail with hearts full of hope. We will give our lives to this work." Again one is moved to say, "Crucified with Christ, self nailed to the cross."

But not all of us have the opportunity of manifesting, or would be capable of manifesting, this great truth as did Paul or the millionaire missionary or the young couple who sailed for the leper colony. There is no one, however, who could not manifest by his example what the world of our day needs most to see, a life so faithful to the Church in all its activities on Sunday, and so devoted to true Christian living daily among men, that all who behold must think, if they do not say it aloud, "Crucified with Christ and unto the world."

VI

What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? It means all that Paul sets forth in these great pictures. It means all the things of sacrifice and Christian service that have been enumerated and illustrated. But it also means infinitely more. Time allows but a glimpse of the "infinitely more." That glimpse should be taken, however, for the burden of the crucified life should not be left on the shoulders of men without at least some mention of the complete and sure compensation that awaits them.

Two exceedingly precious promises enclose, as a jewel in a priceless setting, the picture of the crucified man given in the sixth chapter of Romans; in the verse immediately before the picture, "If we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His (RSV); and in the second verse after the picture, "If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (RSV).

In his second letter to Timothy (2:11f), Paul, now an old man who has borne the burden of the crucified life for a third of a century or more, repeats the promises: "If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure we shall also reign with Him" (RSV). A little later in the same letter (4:8), after reviewing his life as a soldier of the cross, he gives voice to his confident hope of the crown laid up for him, which his Lord will give him, and adds, "not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (RSV).

Finally the Christ crowns all with a promise so glorious that we could hardly believe it if He had not Himself spoken it: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Revelation 3:21). The thought here is of the crucified Christ Himself giving eternal reward to the crucified man! Upon that thought you can let your imagination loose to its utmost limits.

The cross is heavy, Father. I have borne
It long, and still do bear it. Let my worn
And fainting spirit rise to that blest land
Where crowns are given. Father, take my hand
And, reaching down,
Lead to a crown
Thy child.

The cross is heavy, child. Yet there was One
Who bore a heavier cross for thee, my Son,
My well-beloved. For Him bear thine, and stand
With Him at last, and from thy Father's hand,
The cross laid down,
Receive a crown,
My child.[4]

The Crucified Man Delineated

The Marks of Superlative Christianity Fit into and Fill Out the Pictures of the Crucified Man

I. THE BODY OF SIN CRUCIFIED

1. *Living Sacrifice.* "Present your bodies a living sacrifice."
2. *Paul's Heart's Desire.* "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved."

II. CRUCIFIED UNTO THE WORLD

1. *Paul Boasting.* "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ."
2. *Christian Omnipotence.* "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

III. THE FLESH CRUCIFIED

1. *The Branded Bondslave of Jesus.* "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."
2. *The Christian and His Rights.* "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth."

IV. CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

1. *The Mind of Christ.* "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."
2. *Living Christ.* "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

V. CONCLUSION AND CONSUMMATION

1. *On and Up.* "One thing I do. . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."
2. *More Than Conquerors.* "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Part One

The Body of Sin Crucified

Chapter I Living Sacrifice
Chapter II Paul's Heart's Desire

The two marks of superlative Christianity here presented, the body offered in living sacrifice and the deep inner yearning for the salvation of others, fit in a clear-cut way into this picture of the crucified man and emphasize how essential and real is the initial, fundamental crucifixion of "the old man" or "our sinful nature." A human body thus devoted to God and His service, with its physical desires thus subordinated to the soul's desires for the good of others, can truly be regarded as having been nailed to the cross of Christ.

Chapter I

Living Sacrifice

"I beseech you therefore . . . present your bodies, a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1).

Here is the mightiest "therefore" ever written. It gathers in its grasp all the foregoing chapters of the Book of Romans. There is only one other "therefore" in any measure like it, the one beginning the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, as found in most of the modern translations. The word there rises in its appeal from the single chapter immediately preceding it, in which there is a list of the heroes of faith. The word here rises in its appeal from the eleven chapters which precede it, in which Paul has given his conception of the "so great salvation" God has provided in Christ Jesus for all men, Jew and Gentile alike. In these chapters Paul sets forth with evident thought and care his conception of the glorious Gospel of Jesus, thereby projecting into the white light of every consciousness both the righteousness and the abiding mercies of God. He then strikes the heart with his mighty "therefore," and reaches, in the first words of his appeal, the sublimest heights to which man can aspire. From the firm foundation of the sure mercies of God, so clearly shown by the great salvation provided for all, Paul ascends at once into the ethereal blue of

Christian devotion: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

The heart of this great verse, "dedicate your bodies as a living sacrifice," according to Moffat's translation, forms the bed-rock base of superlative Christianity. Such Christian living can be built up on no other foundation than such self-surrender to Christ. In no other way can a man better attest the fullness of such surrender.

I

The principle of sacrifice is as old as human needs. The altar of sacrifice was the first institution for human uplift outside of Eden. The first institution of all for this purpose of uplift was the Sabbath, the day on which God rested after He had finished His work of creation, and which He blessed and sanctified for mankind's well-being forever. The second institution was the home in Eden where man lived in close daily communion with God. But by disobedience man lost Eden, his Paradise. He failed in his stewardship of the Garden and lost his fellowship with God in the Garden. He was driven out. Then we have the third great institution, the first outside of Eden, the altar, by which man began to reach back for that which had been lost.

The practice of offering sacrifices unto God began with the first sons of Adam. Cain brought the fruits of the ground and Abel the firstlings of the flock. Later Noah, coming out of the Ark, "builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast and every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (Genesis 8:20). Abraham near Bethel, at Hebron, and on Moriah, Isaac at Beersheba, and Jacob at Mizpeh and Bethel built altars and made offerings unto God. In the Old Dispensation, from the beginning sacrifices took the form of burnt offerings on altars of stone.

At Sinai, God gave Moses, together with the laws to govern Israel, the system of sacrifices by which the people should give expression to their religious life and maintain contact with Him through the centuries. Under this system of sacrifices provision

was made for everyone to make offering. No one was left out. Whoever was too poor to bring a bullock from the herd might bring a sheep or goat from the flock. Whoever was too poor to bring a sheep or goat might bring two turtle doves or young pigeons. Whoever was too poor to bring doves or pigeons might bring a small measure of meal. Too much emphasis cannot be put on the fact that, in the system which God gave His people, way was made for all, great and small, rich and poor, to bring their offerings to the altar of sacrifice. Likewise, overemphasis cannot be put on the fact that the measure of the Children of Israel's well-being under judges and kings was according to the measure of their faithfulness in obeying God's commandments and in keeping in touch with Him by bringing to the altar of sacrifice their burnt offerings, sin offerings, peace offerings, and other offerings, according to the directions which He had given.

For a clear understanding of what the altar of sacrifice, with its threefold meaning of worship and offering and prayer, meant in those days, let us take a glance at the revelations God made to men by the altar.

By the altar which he built as his first act after coming out of the Ark, Noah heard God say, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake . . . neither will I again smite any more every living thing, as I have done" (Genesis 8:21). God gave Noah His promise—by the altar.

On a mountain in the land of Moriah, Abraham built an altar and laid upon it his son Isaac. He had risen early in the morning to make this journey, as God had commanded, and build this altar and offer this sacrifice. It was in that place that he found Jehovah-jireh! There, after Isaac had been placed upon the altar, God provided an animal, and "Abraham went and took . . . and offered him up in the stead of his son" (Genesis 22:13). The most blessed place human feet can find on this earth, the place of God's provision, Abraham found—by the altar.

Isaac built an altar at Beersheba. And to him there came Abimelech, strong king of all the regions round about. And there they "sware one to another" and made peace between them. Isaac found God's peace—by the altar.

After Jacob's final agreement with his father-in-law Laban for a peaceful separation, he "offered sacrifice upon the mount" where they were tarrying that night. As he took his journey thence, he had a vision of the angels of God about him. He called the place Mahanaim, which means "Two Camps." One of those camps was made up of his own little company, fearful at the thought of the oncoming Esau with his four hundred men. The other camp was made up of God's angels, who were there to protect the fearful ones. Later, at God's command, Jacob with his household went back to Bethel, where he built an altar unto God. By that altar his people were purged of the idol worship and other heathen practices they had engaged in at Shechem. Jacob found God's protection and God's purification—by the altar.

Upon the ruins of the altar of Baal at Ophrah, Gideon built an altar unto God, upon which he offered "a burnt offering with the wood of the grove" of Baal which had been cut down (Judges 6:26). There Gideon, the least in the household of one of the poorest families in Manasseh, found power with which to fight the strangest battle and win one of the most remarkable victories in the annals of men. Gideon found God's power—by the altar.

David, at full cost to himself, bought the threshing floor of Ornan at Jerusalem, which afterward became the site of the Temple, and built there an altar unto God. By that altar he saw the angel sheathe the sword of destruction which had been suspended over Jerusalem. David found God's pity—by the altar.

Solomon, as he began to reign, offered upon the great altar at Gibeon, where the Tabernacle was, a thousand burnt offerings. By that altar the young king was able to make the wisest choice he could make for himself, wisdom to govern his people aright. Elijah built an altar on Mount Carmel, where, in the great test before king and people, the prophets of Baal had failed so miserably. By that altar he saw Israel make the wisest choice a nation of men can make, the choice of the Lord as their God. Solomon and Elijah found capacity to make life's wisest choices, Solomon for himself and Elijah for the people—by the altar.

Noah found God's promise; Abraham, God's provision;

Isaac, God's peace; Jacob, God's protection and purification; Gideon, God's power; David, God's pity; Solomon and Elijah, God-given capacity to make life's wisest choices—all by the altar. What the altar meant to those men of old we of the modern world can make it mean to us. The writer has a deep conviction that we will find these most desirable possessions, these indispensables to the best life, nowhere else.

Then, in the fullness of time, came the culmination of the old system of sacrifices in the *peak* of the world's history, when Jesus made Himself an offering on Calvary and became a sufficient sacrifice for sin forever. By that sacrifice of Himself He swept away the old system, and men no longer need to bring to the altar bullocks or lambs or doves or pigeons or small measures of meal. The death of Jesus abolished the Sinaitic sacerdotal system, but not the principle of sacrifice or the need of the practice of sacrifice on the part of men.

II

Thus we come to the thought of Christian sacrifice; that is, sacrifice as a Christian principle and practice. It is in the words of Paul here—"living sacrifice"! The word to be underscored now is *living*. The Hebrew of old brought the dead body of the animal and put it on God's altar. You and I are to bring our living bodies! We no more build altars of stone upon which to honor God with sacrifices of ceremony. We are to give our lives, honoring Him in the sacrifice of service.

We must still make offerings to God, but the first great offering is that of ourselves, and with that offering must be included all our possessions. We must still make sacrifice, the sacrifice of self-denial. "If any man would come after Me," our Lord said, "let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). Briefly but most meaningfully He thus summed up both the principle and the practice of sacrifice for us today. We give up the things the self seeks, that we may serve Him better. Our time, our talents, our possessions we are to use, not for selfish gain or pleasures, but to bring His reign upon the earth.

As Jesus did in regard to the other matters of the Law, so He did in regard to the principle and the practice of sacrifice—He *filled* them, filled them to the full with meaning. As much more as the living body of a man means than the carcass of a dead animal, so much more has He made sacrifice mean to the Christian than it meant to those of the Old Dispensation.

No, Jesus did not do away with the principle or with the need of the practice of sacrifice when He made the supreme sacrifice of Himself on the cross. He did away only with the old system of ceremonial sacrifices. The principle He embodied in Himself, and the practice He lifted from the level of the dead animal to that of the living man. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." Paul means a sacrifice that is alive. He means the sacrifice of a life, not laid down in death, but laid out in service.

The best examples of lives thus given in service are still found among our missionaries. A feature writer for a daily paper recalled briefly the story of a young man who some years before had given up a fine position with a railroad company and a prospect of promotion to the presidency of the road to go as a missionary to a foreign land, and who later "refused thirty thousand dollars a year to return to the railroad job." By the heading of his short article, "He Gave Up All," and by his comment, this newspaper man showed that he knew superlative Christianity when he saw it exemplified in a life.[1]

But it is not necessary for one to go as a missionary to a foreign land in order to be able to practice this high principle of living sacrifice. It is seen quite as clearly in the life of a veteran of World War II who came home and took the necessary special training, then entered upon his career as preacher and pastor in this country. A graduate of the university of his state, he had a position with a large manufacturing establishment, with the bright promise of a successful business career before him, when he was called to serve his country as a soldier in the Army. Meanwhile he had received a legacy of eighty thousand dollars from his father's estate. While still in the United States Army, he says, he had the strong impression that he ought to give what he had to the cause of Christ and himself to the Gospel ministry. For a

while he resisted and delayed both the giving of his money and himself. But the conviction became so strong that he "had to do something about it." He wrote his pastor to take twenty thousand dollars of the legacy and pay off the debt which he knew was hanging over his home church. He also gave forty thousand dollars to missions. The twenty thousand dollars that remained, however, troubled his conscience and still stood between him and complete surrender to Christ. Finally he decided to give *all* his money; a part of it in another gift to his church, a part to help establish a home for the indigent old people of his native city, a part to the orphanage work of his denomination, and the rest in the form of miscellaneous other gifts. After giving all his *possessions* he was able to give *himself* in full surrender to the will of the master. He is now an active pastor.

The writer, after having heard something of this young man's story, wrote to a fellow student and close associate with him in the seminary for confirmation and the essential details; through this student, also, permission was secured to tell the story as given above. Some excerpts from this fellow student's answer will not be out of place here: "At first he was hesitant about letting anyone know what he had done, but agreed that if the facts could be used for the glory of God he would not keep them secret. . . . The young man is one of the finest I know anywhere. . . . He has a deep insight into the truths of the Christian faith that so many of us don't have. . . . We take long walks in the surrounding woods, and really these walks and talks are more beneficial than many hours of classwork."

Neither is the privilege of the practice of his high principle of sacrifice denied to those who cannot go as missionaries to foreign lands or serve in the pulpits of the homeland. Two Gordon stories show how such practice may be entered into by anyone who will. The first of these stories is *by* S. D. Gordon, in his book *Quiet Talks on Service*. Those who have read the book will recall the story of crippled Maggie's offering her crutches in response to the missionary appeal. What a struggle went on within her bosom as the usher passing the plate drew near! "How I wish I could give something," Maggie thought, "but I haven't even a

penny!" But a voice seemed to say distinctly, "There are your crutches." Maggie gasped. "I couldn't give my crutches; they are my very life." But the voice went on, "You could, and then others would hear about Jesus, and it would mean so much to them. He has meant so much to you—give your crutches!" The victory was won just as the usher paused at her pew. Rather awkwardly she lifted the crutches toward the plate. The usher took the crutches and, with his free hand holding them on the plate, walked back down the aisle. The people saw and understood. Eyes grew dim with tears. Hearts grew tender. They reached again for their purses and checkbooks. One man paid fifty dollars for the crutches and sent them back to Maggie. The offering amounted to hundreds of dollars. Mr. Gordon calls Maggie's offering "a living sacrifice," and closes the story with the sentence, "The little girl, crippled in body but not in any other way, hobbled out of the church the happiest person in the world."

The other of these stories is *of* "Chinese" Gordon, the noted English general. It is told of him that he declined all the money and titles his grateful government wanted to bestow upon him for his magnificent service to the empire, "but accepted a gold medal on which his name and the record of his thirty-three engagements had been inscribed." After his death the medal could not be found. It was discovered that he had sent it to Manchester during the famine, with instructions that it be melted and used to buy bread for the famishing poor. In his diary he had written, "The last and only thing in the world that I valued I have given over to the Lord Jesus Christ." "Such a supreme sacrifice," as the chronicler characterizes it, is of the very essence of superlative Christianity.

We refer again to the newspaper feature writer mentioned above. The remark was made that he knew superlative Christianity when he saw it exemplified in a life. In the last sentence of his article he showed he knew quite as well the shortcomings of most professing Christians of the present day with respect to the practice of real sacrifice. "Most of us," he said, "are quite comfortable in our religious professions so long as no sacrifice

of consequence is required. If called upon to give something we do not want to give, we are disposed to balk, to question the wisdom or the necessity of the sacrifice demanded." [2]

But there *is* a superlative Christianity. One mark of it is the living sacrifice. There are superlative Christians, a few now and then and here and there, those who give themselves and their all freely and fully in the Master's service. Not all of us in our day, to be sure, have the opportunity or the capacity for manifesting such Christianity as did Paul, or even these other men and women mentioned; but there are few of us who could not, each in his place and according to his ability, exhibit daily a higher type of Christian living.

In his poem "The Master of My Boat," Joseph Addison Richards has enshrined the thought we have tried to set forth in this chapter, particularly as exemplified in the superlative Christians used in illustration.

I owned a little boat a while ago,
And sailed the morning sea without a fear,
And whither any breeze might fairly blow,
I steered my little craft afar and near.
Mine was the boat, and mine the air,
And mine the sea, nor mine a care.

My boat became my place of nightly toil,
I sailed at sunset to the fishing ground;
At morn the boat was freighted with the spoil
My all-conquering skill and work had found.
Mine was the boat, and mine the net,
And mine the skill and power to get.

One day there passed along the silent shore,
While I was casting my net into the sea,
A Man Who spake as never man before;
I followed Him—new life began in me.
Mine was the boat, but His the voice,
And His the call, but mine the choice.

Ah, 'twas a fearful night out on the lake,
And all my skill availed not at the helm,
Till Him asleep I awoke, crying, "Take,
Take Thou command, lest waters overwhelm."
His was the boat, and His the sea,
And His the peace o'er all and me.

Once from *His* boat he taught the curious throng,
Then bade me let down nets into the sea;
I murmured, but obeyed, nor was it long
Before the catch amazed and humbled me.
His was the boat, and His the skill,
And His the catch, and His my will.[2]

Chapter II

Paul's Heart's Desire

"My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1).

Paul's heart's desire was the most powerful force in his life. It dominated him, lifted him out of himself and led him to give his life in behalf of others. How overpowering of self it was we see clearly when we turn to Romans 9:3 and hear him under the sway of it exclaim, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

This dominating desire, as expressed in the verse quoted above, was for the salvation of his own people. The use of the word "Israel" in the King James Version (Weymouth and Mrs. Montgomery have "my countrymen" and the *Twentieth Century New Testament* "my people") is justified by the context. The Greek word *auton* clearly refers to the people of Israel, who are frequently mentioned throughout the preceding chapter. The phrases in Romans 9:3, "my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh," make certain who are the objects of Paul's heart's desire.

I

This deep yearning for the salvation of his own people remained strong in Paul to the end of his life. Early in his Christian

experience he became aware of his Lord's purpose in him as "a chosen vessel" to bear testimony "far hence to the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21), but his intense desire for the salvation of his own countrymen never subsided. His deep-dyed Hebraism, intimations of which are in his self-characterizations, "an Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Phillippians 3:5) and "after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee" (Acts 26:5), and which was manifested before his conversion in his vigorous persecution of the followers of Jesus, found expression after his conversion in his persistent efforts in behalf of his own people; efforts that continued despite his awareness of his special mission to the Gentiles.

But Paul's concern for his "kinsmen according to the flesh" is attested in more impressive ways than by anything he said about himself or that was said about him. This attestation is in what he did as a missionary at large of the Gospel of Christ. The primal impulse of the truly Christian heart to bring others to Christ, first those nearest and dearest, the impulse that sent Andrew for his brother Simon, Philip for his friend Nathaniel and the woman of Sychar for her neighbors, found full expression in Paul. "Straightway he preached Christ *in the synagogues,* that He is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). The first thing Luke records of Paul as a Christian after his baptism in Damascus is that he preached Jesus to his own countrymen, blood-born and proselyte.

"Being sent forth by the Holy Ghost" on his first missionary journey, Paul sailed with Barnabas to Cyprus; and at Salamis, their first stop, "they preached the Word of God in the synagogue of the Jews" (Acts 13:1ff). Leaving the island, they came to the mainland of Asia Minor and to Antioch in Pisidia. There "they went into the synagogue." Paul preached Jesus with such power that they "besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath," and "many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas" to hear more. Later, when the Jews "were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming," he declared that he would turn to the Gentiles; nevertheless he said to the Jews, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you" (Acts 13:14ff).

Notwithstanding their experience at Antioch and Paul's avowed purpose to turn to the Gentiles, at Iconium, their next stop, Paul and Barnabas "went both into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed" (Acts 14:1).

When Paul started on his second missionary journey, he had been "publicly acknowledged as the apostle to the Gentiles." [1] In that conference at Jerusalem, "Those who were universally recognized as 'pillars of the truth,' James, Peter and John, gave him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, and agreed that they should be to the heathen what themselves were to the Jews." [1] The special mission to which his Lord had called him was recognized and approved by "the apostles and elders" at Jerusalem. But observe his conduct still in carrying out his special mission.

At Lystra, Paul found Timothy, whom he circumcised "because of the Jews which were in those quarters, for they all knew that his father was a Greek" (Acts 16:3). Paul ever observed strictly the Jewish customs when they did not conflict with or compromise Christian principles. One is constrained to believe that it was only because of his profound convictions and devotion as a Christian that he did not yield to the Judaizing influences which at first so affected Peter and other Christian leaders.

At Philippi there was no synagogue, so Paul and his company joined the little band of devout worshipers down by the river side. At Thessalonica, however, there was a synagogue, and Paul, *"as his manner was,* went in unto them," and for three months preached Jesus as the Christ. Some of the Jews were persuaded, "and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few" (Acts 17:1ff).

Paul was compelled to leave Thessalonica because of the unbelieving Jews, and he and Silas, sent by the brethren at night, went to Berea. There they went again into the synagogue of the Jews, who "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed" (Acts 17:10f). Paul, in his concern for his

countrymen, must have been greatly gladdened of heart to find these "more noble," open-minded Berean Jews.

At Corinth, Paul "reasoned in the synagogues every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." And when Silas and Timothy came, he "was pressed in the spirit, and testified *to the Jews* that Jesus was the Christ." It was only when the Jews opposed and blasphemed that he, shaking out his garments against them, again declared that he would "henceforth" go to the Gentiles (Acts 18:4ff). But observe again that when he came to Ephesus he "went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months . . . concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8).

Because he was hurrying to reach Jerusalem before Pentecost, Paul summoned the Ephesian elders to meet him at Miletus. There he reminded them that he had testified "both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." He revealed to them that he was making this journey to Jerusalem because he felt "bound in the spirit" to go in spite of the warnings of the Holy Spirit that bonds and afflictions awaited him there (Acts 20:17ff). The purpose of this visit, he declared later to Felix, was "to bring alms to my nation, and offerings" (Acts 24:17). In Jerusalem then, at the solicitation of the church, he joined four men who were fulfilling a vow, assuming the charges himself (Acts 21: 20ff), showing again that he would make to the Jews every concession he possibly could that was consistent with his Christianity. "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews" (Corinthians 9:20).

Finally arriving at Rome as a prisoner, Paul, as his first act, called together "the chief of the Jews," that he might assure them that he had done nothing either "against the people, or the customs of our fathers," nor had "aught whereof to accuse my nation" (Acts 28:17ff ASV).

Paul's heart's desire, the great ruling passion of his life, was for the salvation of men, *all* men, but it expressed itself first in behalf of his own countrymen. Such expression was in accordance with both the example and the command of Christ, Who spent

His earthly life mainly among His own people, and emphasized repeatedly that His mission was primarily to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6; 15:24). In His last command, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached to the ends of the earth, Jesus said, "Beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Paul's statement of the all-inclusive purpose of the Gospel is in Romans 1:16: "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Paul's heart's desire, which was so persistently manifested for the salvation of Israel, was not later transferred to the Gentiles. As we have seen, it remained with him to the end. We may say, rather, that it came to include the Gentiles with the Jews. As the commands of our Lord, which at first restricted His messengers to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, later delegated them to the ends of the earth, so Paul's heart's desire, which centered first on his kinsmen according to the flesh, in the end included Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bondsman, freeman, all.

God speed the day when our Lord's great world-sweeping purpose and Paul's all-inclusive conception shall be fully realized! Stanley Jones has given a heart-warming picture of the world as it will be then: "When the Spirit takes hold of each national genius, what a wonderful symphony it will be:—the love of truth of the Anglo-Saxon, the deep thoroughness of the Teuton, the passion for sharing of the Slav, the love of beauty and art of the Latin, the oak-strength of the Scandinavian, the music-loving gay spirit of the African, the matter-of-fact reasonable outlook of the Chinese, the gracious spirit of the Japanese, the profound mysticism of the Hindu—each giving its peculiar manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." [2]

II

To the passion of Paul for the salvation of men, there is, apart from the example of Jesus, but one parallel in the annals of men. It was displayed by Moses on Mount Sinai. On that mountain Moses manifested the unselfishness of his heart to a very high

degree. God was ready to destroy the Children of Israel for their grievous sin before the calf of gold. He said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiffnecked people. Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may destroy them; and I will make of thee a great nation." But Moses said to God, "Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou swarest by Thine own self and saidst to them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven" (Exodus 32:7ff).

Moses was on a high peak of the mountain of self-forgetfulness that day, as well as on Sinai's top. But the next day we see him on a still higher peak, when he returned to God and said in Israel's behalf, "This people have sinned a great sin. . . . Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin . . . and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of the book which Thou hast written" (Exodus 32:31f).

Upon this peak Paul came to stand with Moses. He saw Israel, his own blood kin, in sin and need of a saviour. That saviour he knew as One Who had provided a salvation that could absolve their sin and meet their need. His heart yearned over them with a desire so intense that it burned all selfishness out of his soul and brought from his lips words that are strange to us: "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Cannot the strangeness of these words to us be explained by the fact that such a burning desire for the salvation of men is a stranger to our hearts?

Paul urges Timothy to "stir up the gift of God which is in thee" (II Timothy 1:6). The literal translation of the original is "stir into flame," as is shown in the margin of the American Standard Version and in the text of the *Twentieth Century New Testament*. Someone has asked some searching questions in this connection: "How many of us remind others of flame in our enthusiasm for Christ? Or are we mostly embers that need fanning, and then come only to a dull glow?" Where is a better description of the "smug, complacent" Christianity of our day, to use Dan Crawford's characterization, than in Marion Couthoy Smith's "The Laodiceans"?

We are the Laodiceans; we know not the ice nor the fire;
We never have sprung to the edge of doom at the call of a brave desire:
We have basked in the tepid noontides; we have drawn an even breath;
We never have felt between our lips the savors of life and death.[3]

What better could we do, in our Laodicean lukewarmness, than to contemplate these two, Paul and Moses, as they stand together on this lofty peak of forgetfulness of self in behalf of men in sin? They were so lifted out of themselves with the desire to see Israel saved that they were ready for any sacrifice that would bring that salvation. What other meaning can these two strange verses have, in one of which we see Moses praying to be blotted out of God's book unless Israel can be forgiven, and in the other of which we see Paul at the point of wishing himself accursed from Christ if that will bring his people to Christ?

Paul and Moses stand together on a higher peak than any other mere men ever reached. On the one peak above them stands Jesus. All others are on lesser peaks, most of us indeed on the plains of self-indulgent ease or in the valleys of Laodiceanism, so far below their grandeur that we can hardly reach even in imagination the peak on which they stand.

Moses blotted out of God's book! Nay, I fancy his name is written there in letters of brighter gold than any other's—save Paul's. Paul accursed from Christ! Nay, I feel he stands closer to his Lord than any other—save Moses. What an experience for us if in some way the desire of their hearts for the salvation of their Israel could take possession of our hearts for ours, and lead us up the slopes of the summits they climbed, until we stood within the shadow of the cross, ready for greater sacrifices than any of us have ever yet known for the salvation of men!

Such a dominant heart's desire moved these two to two diligent endeavors. One endeavor was to plead with God for men. They interposed themselves, as it were, between God, ready to destroy, and men, deserving to be destroyed. Moses was more than

once thus between God and guilty men. On the mountain, as has already been pointed out, God saw the people in their abandon of shame before the calf of gold and said to Moses, "Now therefore let Me alone . . . that I may consume them." But Moses did not let God alone, and they were not consumed.

When the Children of Israel came for the first time into the wilderness of Paran and to the borders of the land of Canaan, they rebelled against God and refused to follow Moses forthwith into the new land. They said, "Let us make us a captain, and let us return into Egypt." And God said to Moses, "How long will this people provoke Me? . . . I will smite them with the pestilence, and will disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." But Moses, in sublime forgetfulness of self, interfered again. He called to mind God's own words, "According as Thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression . . ." He pleaded with God, "Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy mercy." And the Lord said, "I have pardoned according to thy word" (Numbers 14:14ff). A man has no greater power with God than that which he exerts when, completely purged of self, he pleads with God for the salvation of his fellow men.

Paul also interceded with God in behalf of those over whom his heart yearned. Near the beginning of many of his epistles we find an expression like this to the Romans (1:9), "God is my witness . . . that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers" (see Ephesians 1:16; Philippians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; I Thessalonians 1:2). And we may well doubt that any church or individual ever realized how much Paul's prayers meant for them. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

The other thing this dominant desire led Paul and Moses to do was to plead with men for God. Read the Book of Deuteronomy and you will find how much and how earnestly Moses pleaded with men for God. Paul's life after his conversion was one long plea to men to turn to God in Christ Jesus. Never is a man so powerful with fellow men as when, consumed with desire

for their good and in entire forgetfulness of self, he pleads with them for God.

A friend of my college days died recently. I attended his funeral in the city where he lived the forty years of his full manhood. I have never witnessed finer tributes to a life—floral, oral and written. And it was not because of any high position that he held. He had risen no higher in business life than to the position of office manager of a department store, and in civic life he had just played the part of an ordinary citizen. It was because of the high type of Christianity that he had lived. Not only was he loyal in every way to his church and his pastor, but all who knew him were impressed with the way he daily lived his religion.

Every morning he had opened the business day in the store with a short devotional service of Scripture reading and prayer. Many of the employees of the store had joined with him regularly in this service. The owners and management of the business bore unanimous testimony to the wholesome influence of his presence and spirit throughout the whole organization. And he had done it all with no hint of fanfare or display. No one had ever thought of him as being overly pious.

But he is given place here because he was constant in doing the two things which so marked the lives of Paul and Moses. He interceded with God for men when he prayed. And he was just as diligent in pleading with men for God. In his quiet, unassuming, tactful way he would say something that manifested his concern for the spiritual well-being of everyone with whom he came in contact. It is said of him that he sought to influence, in some way toward the right relationship with Jesus as Saviour and Lord, every life he touched. Conferences in the office over accounts at the store had often provided opportunities along this line, and questions of amounts due were sometimes momentarily sidetracked for the sake of these higher interests. He had had the knack of doing such things without arousing resentment in the person with whom he talked or in any way compromising the interests of the business establishment.

It seems to me that my old college mate was an example of a higher type of Christian living than is seen in most people today.

Perhaps it might be called superlative Christianity. At any rate, it is a type of religion the world needs in this day to see in professing Christians. And it is not above the reach of many more of us.

The powerlessness with God and men displayed by multitudes of us who are called Christians in this day, and the fruitlessness of our lives in the kingdom of our Lord, are due largely to the unconcern that prevails towards those who stand in the relationship to us in which Israel stood to Moses and Paul. This unconcern is far removed from the burning "heart's desire" that fired them with such zeal and impelled them to such heights in worthy living.

Part Two

Crucified Unto the World

Chapter III Paul's Boasting
Chapter IV Christian Omnipotence

At first glance, the marks of the superlative Christian discussed in this division do not appear to fit clearly into the picture of the crucified man. But a little thought will show how true is the delineation. The man whose glorying is in afflictions and tribulations, for which the world has such dislike, and in the cross of Christ, a good conscience, and the hope of future glory, to which the world is so indifferent, is certainly at cross-purposes with the world. The man who masters all life's experiences and accomplishes its tasks in Christ, Who strengthens him, has surely overcome the world. It is not too much to say of such a man that he is crucified unto the world and the world unto him.

Chapter III

Paul Boasting

"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14).

Most men are inclined to boast. Rarely is one found so modest or so timid that he does not show now and then, in bearing if not in word, his pride in possessions or achievements or associations. In exultation over or exaggeration of such things, some talk much and often, others less profusely and frequently but none the less vaingloriously. One shows his pride in his physical strength, another in his good looks, another in his money or his business, another in his wife or children or both, another in his rank, and so on. Most men are boasters. The thing to be noted is what they boast *about*. Therein is the index to character.

Paul was quite human in this respect. Many times he used the Greek word which in the American Standard Version is translated by the English words "glory," "glory in," or "glorying," but in the King James and the later translations, including the new Revised Standard Version, frequently by the word "boast."

Paul boasted sometimes about those things of which men generally are proud. "Let no one think me a fool . . . yet as a fool

receive me, that I may boast myself a little. . . . Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also" (II Corinthians 11:16f). "If any man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee . . . as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:4ff). "I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" (II Corinthians 11:5).

The evident restraint with which Paul boasted of his own possessions and triumphs, however, is quite significant in its implications, and therefore worthy of our attention. "That which I speak," he says, "I speak not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting" (II Corinthians 11:17). Then, as he begins to recite his lineage, his standing and experiences as a minister of Christ, he says, "I speak as a fool" (II Corinthians 11:23). Such expressions show how conscious he was of the unseemliness of boasting of mere personal possessions and accomplishments.

But if self-imposed restraint is evident in his boasting about ancestry and possessions and achievements, things of which men usually are so proud and about which they are seldom hesitant in speaking, yet there are some things in which Paul gloried unrestrainedly. His boasting in this way concerning *others* was of such things as their liberal giving (II Corinthians 8:24; 9:2); concerning *himself,* it was of afflictions and tribulations, and in the cross of Christ, a good conscience, and the hope of future glory. In such boasting we find another mark of his superlative Christianity.

I

Paul gloried in infirmities. "If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things that concern mine infirmities" (II Corinthians 11:30). "Most gladly . . . will I glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . for when I am weak then am I strong" (II Corinthians 12:9f). In both these passages the Revised Standard Version has "boast."

All will agree that it is rather unusual for one to boast of infirmities, of bodily weaknesses and afflictions. If something like exultation over such things is sometimes heard, it is always *after* the experience, as when a person is recuperating from some operation. But to glory in infirmities as Paul did is in itself a token of a high type of Christianity. The best most of us can do—indeed, we might say that the most the best of us can do—is to endure these things with Christian fortitude and patience. Many cannot do even that, but go through them with murmurings and complainings, sometimes with bitterness of soul. The prayer of Violet Alleyn Story everyone should make his own:

> Keep me from bitterness. It is easy
> To nurse sharp, bitter thoughts each dull, dark hour;
> Against self-pity, O Man of Sorrows, defend
> Me with Thy deep sweetness and Thy gentle power.[1]

Every afflicted person should let re-echo in his heart the title of a poem by Ralph T. Nordlund until the purpose to achieve the goal it sets forth becomes deep-fixed. The title is "Keep Thy Soul From Growing Bitter."

The reason Paul gives for his attitude toward his infirmities reveals his deep insight and lofty character. In the last quotation given above from his second letter to the Corinthians, we find this reason: "that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . for when I am weak then am I strong." Paul had just had a most glorious, uplifting and instructive experience in God's answer to his repeated prayer for relief from an infirmity so grievous that it seemed to him, as his language implies, like a stake of Satan in his flesh. God had not relieved him of this infirmity, but had assured him instead, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9). Paul's infirmities had brought to him the sufficient grace and perfect strength of God. So we have some understanding when we hear him say, "Most gladly therefore will I glory in mine infirmities."

II

Paul gloried in tribulations. "We glory in tribulations also," he wrote to the Christians in Rome. In addition to infirmities within, he gloried in troubles and hardships from without. The word translated as "tribulations" is a strong word, used to denote the severest kinds of sufferings, such as the privations of those besieged in war, or the agony of birth-pangs.

Well we may ask why Paul gloried in such sufferings. His answer is immediate and full: "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts" (Romans 5:3f). Tribulations, Paul had found, brought him through patience and experience and hope to the love of God. This, we must agree, is sufficient reason for such an attitude.

To this we may add what is revealed in John's marvelous vision of a white-robed throng before the throne and before the Lamb. "These are they," John heard the elder say, "which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple" (Revelation 7:13f). Tribulations bring us through patience and experience and hope, not only to the love of God, but also to the throne of God, if they be endured in Christ Jesus. Truly we may glory in anything that brings us to such a consummation.

A most happy state it is indeed if we can but come to Paul's view of and attitude toward tribulations, for tribulations we are sure to have in this world. Our Lord has told us as much. Just before going into the garden He warned those with Him, "In the world ye shall have tribulations." But in sublime reassurance He added at once, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). In Him we can overcome the world with all its tribulations.

Infirmities and tribulations are good for us. They are best for us. This our Father knows, and, knowing, lets them come upon us. How good it will be on our part when we too come to know,

and then to show that type of Christianity that can glory in these things that bring God's love to us and us into His presence.

III

Paul gloried in the cross of Christ. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," he exclaimed as he finished his letter to the Galatians (6:14). The crucified Redeemer was the central theme of his preaching. "We preach Christ crucified" (I Corinthians 1:23). The same theme was central also in his living. "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (I Corinthians 2:2).

Paul's attitude to the cross warrants its being made the central point of this chapter. The center is the rightful place of the cross always. Two of the five things Paul gloried in, boasted about, have already been mentioned—infirmities and tribulations. Two more, a good conscience and the hope of future glory, remain to be mentioned. But the chief thing of all, the cross of Christ, is given its due place in the center of all.

That which Paul gloried in most, the cross of Jesus, is the world's emblem of shame. "They crucified him . . . and the malefactors, one on his right hand and one on his left. . . . And the people stood by beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him. . . . Likewise also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders. . . . And the soldiers mocked him."

That which was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, the world's symbol of deepest debasement, Paul gloried in above all else. Why? Because it manifests best Jesus Christ as the power of God and the wisdom of God (I Corinthians 1:24).

The power of the cross! "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). The universe cannot match the power of the cross to uplift men. A great American preacher and editor said in his last years that he had come to see that what he had hoped could be done for his fellow men through schemes of philanthropy and social reform could be done only through the cross of Christ. "There is no dynamo in

reform save the cross of Christ," he wrote. Such is its power to lift, to draw men to Him whom it holds forth, to sway men's hearts, that it has "transformed the summits of sacrifice into a throne of universal dominion."

The promise in the cross! The uplifted Christ, Jesus crucified, is the world's one hope. "The cross is everything," said a prominent preacher of England. "I find in the cross all that my sins can merit and all that God's justice can demand." An equally prominent American preacher said, "I trust in that infinite redeeming grace which forgives my sins through the merits of the cross and cleanses my soul through the blood of Jesus Christ." To men in sin the cross of Christ means everything.

The permanence of the cross! Because of its power and its promise, we thank God for its permanence. Amid all the varying interpretations of, and despite all the attacks on, the Christian religion, the cross still stands as the hope of mankind. A most significant story came out of World War I. A village was razed by the big guns. No building was left standing. The church was destroyed, except for the one place on its walls where was carved a cross. The cross was unscarred. This story is evidently the inspiration of John Oxenham's poem:

The churchyard stones all blasted into shreds,
The dead reslain within their lowly beds—
The cross still stands!

His house a blackened ruin, scarce a stone
Left on another, yet untouched, alone—
The cross still stands!

'Mid all the horrors of the reddened ways,
Thunderous nights, the dark and dreadful days,
The cross still stands!

Faith folds her wings and hope at times grows dim,
The world goes wandering away from Him—
The cross still stands!

Love with lifted hands and thorn-crowned head
Still conquers death, though life itself be fled—
The cross still stands![2]

IV

Paul boasted of a good conscience. "Our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience that we have behaved in the world, and still more toward you, with holiness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God" (II Corinthians 1:12 RSV). There are few better possessions than a conscience at ease over one's conduct among one's fellow men.

A man may abuse his conscience. He may leave it uninformed, or may render it deformed. He may try to smother it with sophistry or with pleas of self-exculpation and self-justification, ignoring its promptings and warnings. But in the end he must pay the full penalty.

If a man brings his conscience into the light of the cross and keeps it there, that it may have the enlightenment that comes from this radiance, it will ever be a sure guide for his life. But if he denies himself and his conscience the knowledge that comes from this light, let him not forget that there is a light in which he must stand, in the radiance of which all the pristine powers of conscience, both of insight and of condemnation, will be recovered —the light that shines about the throne of final judgment. There each must stand face to face with his conscience fully restored and hear it confirm the sentence of the Judge of all the earth. A foreglimpse of what that final experience may be is in the lines written by C. W. Stubbs:

I sat alone with my conscience
In a place where time had ceased,
And we talked of my former living
In the land where the years increased.
And I felt that I should have to answer
The questions it put to me,
And to face the questions and answers
Through all eternity.

The ghosts of forgotten actions
Came floating before my sight,
And things I thought were dead things
Were alive with terrible might;
And the vision of my past life
Was an awful thing to face,
Alone with my conscience sitting
In that solemn, silent place.[4]

V

One thing more Paul gloried in—his hope of future glory. "Let us glory in the hope of sharing the glory of God" (Romans 5:2). Two words used in the New Testament are usually translated as "glory." One is a substantive and denotes glory in the sense of honor, splendor, the blessedness promised in the hereafter. Paul went on, in superlative Christian living, even unto death in the hope of this glory. The other word, for the most part used in the predicative form, is the one we have been studying, and means "glory in; boast of." In this verse the two words appear side by side. Paul gloried in the hope of glory.

Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis said, "For all men, small as well as great, even for those who have succeeded and apparently conquered all honors, it is true that the best is yet to be. . . . Because life is a series of ascending climaxes, for every man, young or old, it is better further on." Have we that hope? "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him" (I John 3:2).

An anonymous poem, the last in the *Oxford Book of English Verse,* fittingly closes this chapter.

In the hour of death after this life's whim,
When the heart beats low and the eyes grow dim,
And pain has exhausted every limb—
The lover of the Lord shall trust in Him.

When the will has forgotten the life-long aim,
And the mind can only disgrace its fame,

And a man is uncertain of his own name—
The power of the Lord shall fill his frame.

When the sigh is heaved and the last tear shed,
And the coffin is waiting beside the bed,
And the widow and child forsake the dead—
The angel of the Lord shall lift his head.

For even the purest delight may pall,
And power must fail and pride must fall,
And the love of the dearest friends grow small—
The glory of the Lord is all in all.[5]

Chapter IV

Christian Omnipotence

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

The thought in this verse is stupendous. It is magnificent. But it is the privilege and the right of the children of God to think such a thought. There is nothing small in the Christian conception. The salvation that is provided through Christ, the work we are given to do for Him, the hope that is ours concerning the eternal future in Him, are all big beyond human conception.

In regard to the "so great salvation" provided, Jesus said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden" (Matthew 11:28), and, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). In regard to the work the Christian has to do, He said, "Make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19), and, "Be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In regard to the hope for the future, He said, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3), and, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His

throne" (Revelation 3:21). Littleness has no place in any part of the Christian conception.

Such largeness and magnificence are in the text "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." This statement sounds like Paul. It fits the likeness in our minds of the great Christian that he was. It gives us the thought of Christian omnipotence.

I

Let us look first at the setting from which this magnificent conception comes. In the last chapter of his letter to the Philippians, Paul tells the members of that church of his joy at their concern for him as manifested in their repeated contributions to his physical well-being. Then he says, "Not that I speak in respect to want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Here is seen the wide range of Christian experience. Paul speaks of plenty and want and uses the words "abased" and "abound," "full" and "hungry." The record of his Christian life discloses that he sounded, as it were, every note of human experience, from the deepest bass of suffering to the clearest bell-like tones of joy.

Paul had been humbled. He had been beaten with rods and lashed with the scourge. He had been stoned. He was a prisoner of Rome at the time he wrote this letter. He had been made as the filth of the earth, the offscouring of all things. Paul knew indeed how to be abased.

He knew also how to abound. He had tasted the fullness of joy. He had been on the heights. He had stood triumphant before kings and emperors. He had swayed men's hearts with his words. He had escaped as by a miracle the jaws of death. He had had visions of God's own presence with him in hours of danger, in the night, in prison, in a storm at sea. He had heard

God's voice speaking to him in encouragement and assurance. He had been caught up into Paradise, even to the third heaven, and had heard words not lawful for a man to utter. Paul knew also what it was to abound.

For us also there will likely be the widest range of experience of which we are capable. For us too the tide will ebb and flow. The pendulum will swing back and forth in our lives, from the heaviest heartache to the keenest joy. We may have glimpses and foretastes now and then that will lift us to the heights and lighten our souls, but we may also descend into such a night that there seems to be no star of hope shining for us. Capacity alone will limit the range of our experience.

One of the main manifestations of divine wisdom is found in the fact that the monotony of life is thus broken. Nothing becomes irksome to human beings more quickly than sameness. The capacity to enjoy sustained bliss is not given to human hearts, but is reserved for redeemed spirits. The wisdom of the Heavenly Father is in no way better disclosed than in the variety with which He has endowed life on the earth. "No pleasure endures unseasoned by variety," says the old adage. "Variety is the spice of life that gives it all its flavor," wrote Cowper. So we have day and night, heat and cold, rain and sunshine, sorrow and joy.

If all the skies were sunshine,
Our faces would be fain
To feel once more upon them
The cooling splash of rain.

If all the world were music,
Our hearts would often long
For one sweet strain of silence
To break the endless song.

If all of life were merry,
Our souls would seek relief
And rest from weary laughter
In the quiet arms of grief.[1]

II

The text reveals that there is duty in the Christian life, the obligation of doing. Paul said, "I can *do* all things." How much of activity there was in his life as a Christian! Incessant effort marks his Christian career. See the territory covered in those great missionary journeys, from Antioch to Cyprus, to Asia Minor, to Philippi, to Athens, to Rome! The records we have of Paul's life reveal constant endeavor, worthy accomplishment, greatest and highest achievement for his Lord.

Let no one forget that the Christian life is full of duty for us also. Much remains for us to do. We must ever be engaged in effort for Him Who has called us and commissioned us for His work. He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). And His "Follow me" calls us to the same sort of activity. Someone has written of "Good-for-Nothing Good People," of whom there are three classes: first, those "who do no work at all"; secondly, "those who have drifted out of the churches"; thirdly, "those who are cherishing the Christian hope, but who refuse publicly to acknowledge their Master. . . . There are too many good people who are good-for-nothing in the work of the kingdom." None of these can find answer to the Master's question, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things that I say?" Verily, the true Christian life is, like that of Dorcas, filled with good deeds done for God and for fellow men.

The commands of our Lord, in addition to His example, call us to much doing. They call us to the quest for the good that we may do. "Go and make disciples of all the nations," He said (Matthew 28:19, RSV and all other late translations). Again He said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). And yet again, "Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works" (Matthew 5:14ff). Oh, how much there is for us to do before these tasks are done!

And always, with these mighty tasks which His example and commands have laid upon us, there are the little deeds of every-

day life, the routine duties of home and office, of shop and field, the things that fall upon us as the common lot of mankind, wherever we mingle with people at work, at play, at life. We are not freed from these things we call "little" because we are disciples of the Lord Christ charged with the great work of His kingdom. The tasks of the kingdom come upon us as additional duties, work over and above that which those who are not Christians are called upon to do. We must do these things of the kingdom, yet not leave undone the other things common to all men.

III

Best of all, we see in Paul's statement Christian omnipotence. We have already seen in it the range of experience and the field of duty for the Christian. These are inclusive of life's requirements. There are things we must do and things we must endure. Meeting these requirements in full is a sign of the comprehension of life's obligations. The power for such achievement is in Him Who strengthens us, and that power is *sufficient*. This is what is meant by *omnipotence*.

Paul's testimony to the sufficiency of this power in the whole range of experience is in his assertion "I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content." What we need is to make sure that we understand the *con*tent of Paul's con*tent*. In Classical Greek the primary meaning of the latter word is "self-sufficient." But it certainly means more than that as Paul uses it.

In two other places only does the word occur in the New Testament, both of them in Paul's epistles. Seeing its meaning in these two other instances will help us to apprehend its meaning here. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, having all *sufficiency* in all things, may abound in every good work" (II Corinthians 9:8). "Godliness with *contentment* is great gain" (I Timothy 6:6). The former of these verses, in which the word is translated "sufficiency," makes it clear that it is by no means *self*-sufficiency, but is the result of the "abounding grace" of God. "By the grace of God I am what I am" (I

Corinthians 15:10). Paul thus shows to the Corinthians that he knows full well the truth that in him, in both character and achievement, nothing is of self but all is of the grace of God. In the latter verse it is seen that Paul makes this sort of contentment the twin associate of godliness. From the two verses together, therefore, we must conclude that the contentment that Paul wrote about to the Philippians is not possible apart from God.

We shall go far astray if we take Paul's contentment as coming in any way or measure from the self-sufficiency of the exaggerated ego, which is exemplified in Napoleon Bonaparte, and the final, fatal futility of which St. Helena stresses with all possible emphasis. Paul's sufficiency was not in himself, but was from God in the indwelling Christ. "Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). "Such trust we have through Christ to Godward. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (II Corinthians 3:4f).

We must ever associate the thought of Paul's sufficiency with the fact that Christ was living in him. That was the ground of his consequent confidence "to Godward." The adequacy of that sufficiency and the potency of that reliance we cannot mistake if we look at his conquering life and triumphant death.

Contentment in Paul's thought and life was always in close association with God and His grace. Indeed, only in Christ, the perfect manifestation of the grace of God, could he find this sufficiency for all he had to undergo and do, this contentment in whatever state he found himself. And we shall not be able, even in this modern world, to find anywhere else these most precious possessions.

We shall go far astray also if we take Paul's contentment to be that of indolence, of complacency, of a drowsy, listless love of ease that would yield to circumstances rather than struggle to rise above them. Of such contentment there is a great deal to be found in the world of our day. But the contentment of Paul was that of an invincible spirit that had risen in Christ to be independent of external circumstances. The *Twentieth Century*

New Testament translation of Paul's statement is: "I have learned to be independent of circumstances."

Paul was not in subjection to his environment. His peace of soul did not depend on things about him. Humiliation and want could not cast him down. Success and plenty could not conquer his self-control. He ran the whole gamut of human experience. He plumbed the depths and scaled the heights. He went all the way from the dark dungeon, with his feet in the stocks, to the third heaven. But in the Philippian jail or on Mars Hill, under the scourge or the rod or before kings and rulers trembling at his words, in prison or palace, in want or plenty, in sorrow or joy, he was ever the same true, steadfast, calm, confident Christian. It was thus that he came to the victory of victories, a holy contentment in whatever lot life placed him, a sufficiency in Christ Jesus that gave him the mastery of earthly circumstances. It was thus that Christian omnipotence became a fact to him on the fields of both experience and achievement.

A prominent lawyer in a Southern city, honored by all who knew him for his Christian life and his leadership in kingdom work, died suddenly of a heart attack. On the mantel in his room was found, a few days later, the following paragraph, which he had clipped and underlined only a few hours before his death, as the date penciled on the slip showed: "The master Christian is no weakling. . . . He stands erect and looks all men in the face. . . . When fortune turns against him and the world turns him down, he is still sweet and jubilant in spirit, and is still unconquered. . . . No circumstances are too overwhelming for him to rise above."

Paul was a master Christian. More of us might also become master Christians. We too might have that sufficiency that comes of God's grace, that contentment that is the twin associate of godliness, that all-power in Christ Jesus that lifts us above things and circumstances. Is there anyone anywhere so complacently self-satisfied that he does not aspire, or so dull of soul that he feels no impulse to strive, toward such attainments?

The pity is that so few attain unto these things. When

trouble comes, many people become so blue and sad of countenance that they make everyone about them gloomy. When success and triumphs come, they are swept off their feet and become puffed up with pride. Sometimes they become so exultant that they make spectacles of themselves, if not nuisances, in the eyes of everyone around them. Rarely do we find a person who is calm and steadfast and sweet and serene under all circumstances, who is just as steadfast and serene and full of faith and hope in adversity as in prosperity. One of life's worthiest achievements is to rise in Christ Jesus to the mastery of external circumstances, as Paul did, and be able to say with him, as Weymouth translates, "I have learned, whatever be my outward experiences, to be content. I know both how to live in straitened circumstances and how to live amid abundance. I am fully initiated into all the secrets both of fullness and of hunger, of abundance and of want. I have strength for anything through Him Who gives me power."

Christian omnipotence may become a fact to anyone, every one, in the two great realms of life, the field of duty and the range of experience. This all-power in Christ is sufficient for all the experiences the Christian life can bring to us, and all the duties that Christian service can lay upon us. All the changes of fortune, from the depths to the heights and from pole to pole, we can undergo; and all the duties, the tasks big and little, we can perform—through Him Who strengthens us. In short, all that Christian living on this earth requires of us we can accomplish in the strength that Christ Jesus our Saviour and Lord is ready to give us. In Him we can meet all experiences. In Him we can perform all duties. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

Whene'er I am in God's employ,
I am a millionaire of joy.
Whene'er I lift my eyes above,
I am a millionaire of love.
Whene'er with love my feet are shod,
I am a millionaire of God.[3]

Part Three

The Flesh Crucified

Chapter V The Branded Bondslave of Jesus
Chapter VI The Christian and His Rights

We find the marks of the superlative Christian described in Part Three fitting exactly into the third picture of the crucified man. Scars on the body that brand one as the bondslave of Jesus, and the inner control that is capable of surrendering for the sake of others the elemental right of choice in the matter of one's food, indicate a complete mastery of self. Such self-mastery has been depicted in no better way than by Paul's figure of a crucifixion of the flesh with its passions and desires.

Chapter V

The Branded Bondslave of Jesus

"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus"
(Galatians 6:17).

There are two conceptions of the Christian life. One considers only the privileges; the other includes also the obligations. Discipleship of Jesus does confer surpassing privileges—salvation from sin, sonship of God and heirship with Christ of all the eternal glories! But the discipleship of Jesus also lays heavy obligations. It means dedication of one's life in service to Him, devotion of one's powers and possession in a life-long effort to extend the privileges of His kingdom to all men. It may mean, as it has to many who have served most, great sacrifices and tribulations.

Some people do not go beyond the first conception. They think only of the privileges. Jesus suffered to set us free, died that we might live. Such people want for themselves the freedom and life that He gives, but they forget their duty to Him, their obligation to try to give to others the same freedom and life. Jesus said, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Their sole purpose, it would seem, is to enjoy the rest. They fail to remember that He said also, "Seek ye first the king-

dom of God and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33), and, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). Their conception of the Christian life is a selfish conception. They think or attempt little beyond enjoying the matchless privileges bestowed.

Others there are who are ready to assume the obligations as well as enjoy the privileges of the Christian life. This alone is the true conception of complete Christianity. This chapter calls the reader to such a conception. It urges all to think beyond the realm of mere privileges and to venture to enter into the realm of obligations. It pleads with all to seek to explore this latter realm throughout all its borders, where alone superlative Christianity is found.

There are two calls to the Christian heart. They divide where the two conceptions divide. One points out the benefits of the Christian life; the other, the opportunities of service it affords. One sets forth what is to be gained; the other, what is to be done. One dwells on what may be enjoyed in Christ; the other, on what may endured with Him. Those who respond to the first call make up the great mass of common, everyday Christians so well known to all of us. Those who respond to the second call also do the real work of the Master. Among them are to be found the few superlative Christians that balance the scales in the kingdom of God.

When Garibaldi the patriot summoned young Italy to his banner, it was with this call: "I offer not pay, provisions, quarters; I offer hunger, forced marches, battles, death, but a free Italy." But to such a call the youth of Italy responded in such a way as to break the yoke of Austrian domination and bring a free and united country. Their patriotism could not be questioned. No more can the Christianity of those who respond to duty and service and self-denial and sacrifice be questioned. They of Italy were super-patriots; these of the kingdom are superlative Christians.

If anyone ever explored the realm of obligations throughout all its borders, where alone superlative Christianity is found, that one was Paul. Speaking to us from this realm, this bondslave of

Jesus says, "I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus" (W). He had no thought of stopping to rest on mere privileges. "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Romans 1:14f). The first of these statements shows that Paul felt the full weight of the obligation to all men that lay upon him; the second, that the sense of that obligation was matched completely by his readiness and purpose to do his utmost to discharge the obligation. And crystal clear to everyone is the fact that his life made good his word.

An indisputable mark of Paul's superlative Christianity is in the verse that is at the head of this chapter: "I bear on my body the scars that mark me as a slave of Jesus" (G). Let us try to see something of the meaning of those scars, brand-marks of Jesus that they were.

I

They meant that Jesus owned Paul completely. Those scars were the token of that ownership. "I bear branded on my body the owner's stamp of Jesus" (M).

On the great plains of the West men brand their cattle and horses, each owner with his own peculiar brand. Such brand-marks settle any question of ownership that may arise. In olden times the owner sometimes branded his slaves. The slave was a marked man. He bore the brand-mark of his master. It is thus that Paul is thinking of himself in relation to his Master.

In his letters Paul gives himself two titles, "apostle" and "slave." When he is thinking of his relationship to those to whom he writes, he calls himself an apostle. When he is thinking of his relationship to his Lord, he uses the word that means "slave," the full meaning of which is found only in our term "bondslave." In the text Paul goes to the utmost limit in representing himself as the brand-marked bondslave of Jesus.

Dr. Alexander Maclaren has said, "What lies in this metaphor? Well, it is the most uncompromising assertion of the most

absolute authority on the one hand, and claim of unconditional surrender and subjection on the other. . . . We and our duties and our circumstances and our relationships are all in His hands, and the one thing that we have to render to Him is utter, absolute, unquestioning, unhesitating, unremittant and unreserved obedience and submission. That which is abject degradation when it is rendered to a man, that which is blasphemous presumption when it is required by a man, that which is impossible in its deepest reality between man and man, is blessed, joyful and strong when it is required by and rendered to Jesus. We are His slaves if we have any relationship to Him at all." [1]

David Livingston said, "I will place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relationship to the kingdom of Christ. If anything I have will advance the interest of that kingdom, it shall be given away or kept only as by giving or keeping it may promote the glory of Him to Whom I owe all my hopes in time and in eternity."

William E. Gladstone said, "All that I am, all that I have, all that I hope to be is centered in Jesus Christ, benevolent Son of Mary, Almighty Son of God, and Saviour of my poor wayward life."

II

The marks of Jesus which Paul bore on his body were evidences of service rendered. They were not burned into his flesh by the red-hot iron in the ordeal of branding, but by fiery trials in the Master's service. They came of wounds received in battles for his Lord. There were long white welts on Paul's back, made by the Roman rods. Three times, he tells us, he was beaten with rods. Among those long welts, which crossed and recrossed each other, there were scars left by the knotted cords of the Jewish scourge. Five times the scourge had been laid on his back. At Lystra he had been dragged out of the city and stoned until his persecutors thought him dead. No one can doubt that he carried scars from that stoning to his grave.

These scars were proof that he had been earnestly and cour-

ageously about his Master's business. No morbid asceticism, no self-inflicted castigations or flagellations were responsible for the scars Paul bore. They were received in the heat of the conflict, and were proof indisputable of the service he had rendered.

David Livingston bore on his shoulder the scar of a wound made by a lion which attacked him in the jungles of Africa. Not only does Livingston's nearly a third of a century in Africa come close to matching Paul's long term of service to Christ in the lands around the eastern Mediterranean, but he also bore on his body marks that proved his devotion to his Lord. Yet the missionary to the Dark Continent said, "People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owed God, which we never can pay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own best reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with such a thought! It was emphatically not a sacrifice. Say rather that it was a privilege. I never made a sacrifice."

Dr. Curtis Lee Laws, long-time editor of the *Watchman-Examiner* of New York, writes of Dr. Grenfell of Labrador's declaration that, after considering the matter, he has concluded that he does not know anything about sacrifice by actual experience. Dr. Laws then goes on with fine irony to say that there are many modern Christians who can "give him all the information he needs on the subject." He enumerates some of the little things these present-day Christians do and the little amounts they give, which they call sacrifices, and exclaims, "Oh, yes, they know all about sacrifice!" But he adds, "It seems a little odd that such men as Dr. Grenfell and David Livingston and Adoniram Judson and Paul do not appear to understand this matter as well as ordinary people do."

We "ordinary" Christians—very ordinary, most of us—go on excusing ourselves, if not actually commending ourselves, for the little we do and give, although it does not even approach the standard of real sacrifice. We "smug, complacent" Christians of this day, to repeat Dan Crawford's characterization of us,

talk glibly about our sacrifices, but the truth is that most of us, particularly in this country, live out our lives in ignorance of anything like real sacrifice and self-denial in the service of Christ. In this matter we are falling far short in discipleship of Him Who was wounded for our transgressions and was bruised for our iniquities, and by Whose stripes we are healed.

He touched the leper tenderly,
So in His hands there came to be
Wide wounds not made by nails.
Alas, my hands are smooth and fair,
No wound is on them anywhere,
Nor scarlet scar of nails.

His feet were torn by stone and thorn,
As slow He moved on roads forlorn,
But joyous hearts accompanied Him.
Alas, my feet are softly shod,
But on the way that leads to God
Scarcely have they moved with Him.

So, all wounded by the way,
He came home at close of day,
And angels met Him at the gate.
Alas, His way I've little known,
The road forlorn, the wounding stone,
And no one waits me at the gate.[2]

III

The marks of Jesus that Paul bore on his body were badges of honor. Jesus bore on His hands and feet the print of the nails, in His side the mark of the spear, on His brow the scars made by the crown of thorns. What honor to stand beside Him Who was thus wounded and scarred for humanity's sake, with the marks of service rendered in His name branded on one's body! That honor Paul had. The scars he bore were badges of honor

because they were received, like the wounds of Jesus, in hardships and trials and sufferings endured for the sake of others. They identified Paul not only as *belonging to* Jesus, but also as *being like* Jesus. They were badges of highest honor.

To Ananias, Jesus said of Paul, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before Gentiles, and kings" (Acts 9:15). The word translated as "bear" means more than merely transporting, more even than carrying in patient endurance; it suggests a sense of triumph in carrying. It was in such a bearing of the name of Jesus that Paul received his scars, and so was able to say with legitimate pride, "I bear[3] . . . the marks of Jesus." Old Chrysostom points out that "he says not, 'I have,' but, 'I carry,' like a man priding himself on a trophy or ensign of a king."

In his letter to the Philippians Paul tells of the completeness of his surrender to Christ, and gives the reason for that surrender. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I suffered the loss of all things . . . that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the *fellowship of His sufferings*" (3:8f). The ultimate of Paul's aim in Christ was to enter into fellowship with His sufferings. The marks he bore on his body show that he had entered into that blessed fellowship.

To the Colossians, Paul wrote, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking in the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church" (1:24, ASV). It seems that he looked upon those scars almost with exultation, as they accumulated on his body, because they seemed to him to be what was needed to bring him into full fellowship with Christ. Here is revealed a Christianity so superlative as to be almost beyond the present day's apprehension.

Paul's own record of his sufferings is in the nature of a paean of triumph: "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice I was beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and

a day have I been in the deep; in journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (II Corinthians 11:23ff). Bearing the name of Jesus in such hardships and tribulations, he also came to bear on his body the scars that marked him not only as a bondslave of Jesus but also as having entered into a fellowship with Jesus attained by only a few, the fellowship of His sufferings.

IV

The marks of Jesus which Paul bore on his body were bonds of surety. If, in the first two phases of their meaning, the branding of ownership and the proof of service rendered, there was pain, in the last two phases of their meaning, when they became badges of honor and bonds of surety, there is eternal promise. In this life such marks mean suffering and hardship, but in the hereafter they will mean perfect security and joy forevermore. Livingston's scar from the wound made by the lion not only was proof of his devoted service, but, as someone has said, was also his "identification mark" before Christ "sitting on His throne of glory."

Will Carleton's story of "a little mother" is particularly appropriate here. The fourteen-year-old girl, left by the death of her mother in charge of younger brothers and sisters, was faithful to her trust, teaching them their prayers and sending them to Sunday School "just like Mother did." But she wore herself out at the task. Facing the end for herself, she said anxiously to her neighbor:

> Bess, I've been so tired at night,
> I've quite forgot to pray;
> Now whenever I meet my Master,
> Whatever shall I say?

The neighbor replied:

> Mary, I wouldn't say a word to Him;
> I'm sure He understands;
> Not a word I'd say to Him;
> Just show Him your hands.[4]

What sufficiency with Him Who bore the scars of the nails was in those hands so worn with loving care for some of "the least of these"!

Let none misunderstand or misinterpret. What is being proclaimed here is not salvation by works, but only the thought that these marks of the Lord Jesus were to Paul, as like scars may be to any and all, badges of honor and bonds of surety, because they were stamps of his Lord's ownership of him and proof of service rendered through suffering and sacrifice.

Nor is it being suggested that we ought to go out with special purpose to get our bodies marked with scars. In this land, in our day, discipleship to Jesus is attested more by dedicated pocketbooks than by branded bodies. Our test in the modern world is not in scars in the flesh, but in gifts for the work of our Lord's kingdom that cut into our bank accounts. Most of us are called upon not to endure prisons and perils, cold and nakedness, but, with the fields both at home and abroad "white already unto harvest," to give until the marks of Jesus are on our possessions.

Is the brand of Jesus on any of us? Is the mark of the Master at all on him who spends more, often many times more, on mere pastimes and pleasures than he gives to all religious work? Yet that is the record of the average American citizen. Someone has said that "money is the acid test." That seems to be superlatively so in our day, for our people. Most of us in this day and land are not called upon to *undergo* bodily suffering so much as to *undertake* pocketbook dedication.

An old legend, which the present-day Christian needs to ponder much, tells of a stranger with "lordly look" and "princely attire" who came to the cell of Saint Martin, where the good saint was engaged in the study of the New Testament. "Who

art thou?" asked the monk. "I am the Christ," said the stranger. The bearing and tone might have deceived a less wise man, but Saint Martin, after one searching look, simply asked, "Where are the nail-prints?" In confusion Satan fled from the cell. Can modern American Christianity face unconfused and unafraid the question "Where are the nail-prints?" Annie Johnston Flint has enshrined this thought in the following poem:

Except we see in His hand the print of the nails that marred it,
Except we see in His side the mark of the spear that scarred it,
We are right to refuse to believe, to challenge His claims and doubt them;
For the wounds are the sign of the Christ, and He will not come without them.

Vain are the saviours of men who can show no wounds for a token,
False are the Christs of the world whose hearts have never been broken;
We are right to reject their claim, since only the One can dare it,
We are right to deny their name, since only the One can bear it.

Can they spread the nail-pierced palm, that the finger of doubt may feel it,
Uncover the riven side and to doubting eyes reveal it?
The wounds are the sign of the Christ and only the One can show it,
And only those who have touched His wounds will prove Him Lord and know it.

For it is not enough for our faith that others have seen and known Him,
But each for himself must see, and each for himself must own Him:
And each must touch the print of the nails, the proof of His claim receiving,
And each must cry, "My Lord, my God," and fall at His feet believing.[5]

Chapter VI

The Christian and His Rights

"If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (Corinthians 8:13).

A study of superlative Christianity leads inevitably to the problem of the Christian and his rights. In Paul's solution of the problem, as given in the verse quoted above, we find one of the clearest of all the marks of the superlative Christian. None would deny, none could question even, the superlative quality of the religion of a man who for such a reason would yield up the primal right to choose what he should eat. Superlative Christianity here meets one of its severest tests, in such a situation is given opportunity for its most constant, practical and perhaps most effective expression.

The Christian has rights. Upon becoming a Christian he still remains a man, and retains therefore the rights of a man. A famous and familiar document declares some truths to be self-evident. Among them is one which proclaims that all men are "endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights." Some of these rights are "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." A man's right to eat, choosing himself what he shall eat, is certainly among the inalienable rights. This right the Christian has in common with all men.

The question here, however, is not of the fact of the Christian's rights, but rather of his use of his rights. What ought to be the Christian's attitude toward the exercise of his rights? In the fourteenth chapter of Romans and the eighth chapter of I Corinthians, Paul puts the question in its simplest form, faces it in one of its acutest aspects, and answers it in the clearest and most complete way.

The simplicity of the question lies in his leveling it down to the commonplace matter of daily diet. There is no complexity about that, and no difficulty in understanding the problem involved or the solution evolved.

The acuteness of the question arose then from the situation in the food markets in those heathen cities. Practically all available meats came from sacrifices made to idols. Part of the animal slain was offered in sacrifice, part given to the priests, and the rest taken away by the worshiper to provide food for his family or feasts for his friends, or to be disposed of in the markets. The priests often sold their portions to the dealers. In this way the Christian who took any part in social life or patronized the markets was constantly brought face to face with the question of whether to utilize meats offered to idols. Some had scruples in the matter. Others were more liberal in their views. Both groups were conscientious, it may be assumed, but neither was tolerant of or patient with the other. Thus the question became acute.

Essentially the same situation prevails now in regard to many matters, for the principle still holds and human nature has not changed. The question of meats may not be involved, but the principle applies as explicitly in other matters, such as the problem of drinking, the amusement question, the controversy between liberal and conservative that is being waged in the various realms of life. Though both groups may be entirely conscientious, the scrupulous conservative is intolerant of the lenient liberal, and the lenient liberal is impatient with the scrupulous conservative.

The clearness and completeness of Paul's answer are seen in the light of the great principles he brings to bear upon the question. The answer given in the last verse of the chapter in Corinthians, as Paul's conclusion of the whole matter—"If meat

causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh forevermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble" (ASV)—is simon-pure unselfishness. "His sudden turning to his own conduct," says Dr. Maclaren, "is beautiful. He will not so much command others as proclaim his own determination."[1] Paul's clear and complete answer is thoroughly Christian, is Christlike, is the answer of superlative Christianity.

In the light of the same principles we can find similar answers in all realms to this real "test question to the degree of our Christianity." The purpose of this chapter is to try to discover and disclose these principles.

I

The first of these great principles is that of brotherhood. "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? . . . If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. . . . It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" (Romans 14:1ff). Add to this passage the verse already quoted from Corinthians.

This principle applies alike to the scrupulous and the liberal, to both the weak and the strong. Each has to the other the obligations of Christian brotherhood.

By no means, let it be understood at the outset, are we to hold that scrupulousness and weakness are synonymous terms, or to associate liberalmindedness always with strength. When Paul speaks of a weak faith, his thought seems to be of the lack of a faith strong enough to rise above prejudice. And neither group had then, nor has it now, a monopoly on faith strong enough to free one from prejudices.

Scruples must not be allowed to run one into scrupulosity. The scrupulous person must not become punctilious, then censorious of others. Goodspeed's "overscrupulousness" strikes nearest the heart of the matter, perhaps. No more must broadmindedness become superficial, and arrogantly critical and condemnatory. In

the third and fourth verses of the chapter in Romans, Paul exposes the fault of overscrupulousness on the one side and of near-superciliousness on the other. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth."

But the Christian obligation supreme in human relationships is the obligation of strength to weakness, of knowledge to ignorance. Paul makes this fact stand out in his discussion in both chapters. In the first verses of the fifteenth chapter of Romans he gives his conclusion in view of what he has said in the fourteenth chapter—"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves . . . For even Christ pleased not Himself." In the last verse of the chapter in Corinthians he records his determination in regard to the whole matter.

A man said, "I am sick and tired of this everlasting 'weak brother' business. All my life I have had it preached to me that I ought to refrain from things I want to do on account of my weak brother." Can it be said that there is even a glimmer of the Christian spirit in an impatience that would so set at naught the weak brother? Compare the spirit of Paul, as disclosed in these Scriptural passages, with the spirit of the man just quoted, and you will surely get some understanding of what is meant by superlative Christianity.

We might well ponder the kinship in substance of such disregard of a brother man as that indicated above, be he weak or strong, with the spirit disclosed in the first words attributed to man outside of Eden: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Someone has pointed out that most of the troubles in human history have come of the spirit disclosed in this question, while most of the social good has come of the practice of the principle of brotherhood.

Superlative Christianity can stand on no other ground in human relationships than that of brotherhood. "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren" (Matthew 23:8). Intolerance of and impatience with brethren proclaim one's

religion as of low degree. But patience, sympathy, sweet reasonableness, however grave may seem a brother's faults, mark it as of high quality.

The story is told that on the streets of Edinburgh, Dr. Guthrie came upon a little girl carrying a child much too heavy for her. "My dear," said the good doctor gently, "isn't the baby too heavy for you?" "No, sir," was the reply. "You see, he's my brother." Superlative Christianity is able to carry the weak brother, however great a burden he may be.

II

The second great principle that Paul brings to bear upon the question of the Christian's rights is that of the superiority of love over knowledge. That is the main argument throughout the eighth chapter of I Corinthians, as brotherhood is throughout the fourteenth chapter of Romans. "We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up" (marginal reading, ASV). "If a man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth not yet as he ought to know; but if a man loveth God, the same is known by him. . . . We know that no idol is anything in the world, and that there is no God but one. . . . Howbeit there is not in all men that knowledge. . . . Through thy knowledge he that is weak perisheth, the brother for whom Christ died" (ASV). One verse in Romans fourteen applies to this principle: "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself."

Knowledge *puffs* up. "Puffed up things are swollen by wind only," says Dr. Maclaren, "and the more they are inflated the hollower and emptier they are." [2] Love *builds* up. And the edifice it rears is like a structure of solid masonry. As someone has said, "We have brought before us the picture of the rising of some stately fabric upon a firm foundation, course by course, stone by stone, each laid by a separate act of the builder's hand, and carefully bedded in place, until the whole is complete."

Knowledge is egoistic. It says "*I* know" and "*we* know." Love is altruistic. It says "*your* need" and "*your* good." Knowledge is concentrative on self; love is considerate of others.

Knowledge is deficient. We know only in part, and only some of us know. No one yet knows "as he ought to know." Love never fails. It is ever patient and kind and generous and courteous and good-tempered and guileless and optimistic. Love is the fulfilling of the whole law.

How this principle did apply to the situation in Rome and in Corinth in Paul's day! The Christian of liberal mind could say, "I know that an idol is nothing in the world and that there is but one God the Father and one Lord Jesus Christ. I know nothing is unclean of itself. I know that the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking. Therefore I will eat what I please." Thus knowledge alone, self-centered and self-concerned only, would settle the matter.

But Paul the superlative Christian said, "This knowledge all men do not possess, and so some one seeing me in my knowledge sitting in an idol's temple or eating meat offered to idols, might be emboldened to do the same thing, to the defilement of his conscience. Thus through my knowledge a weak brother for whom Christ died might perish. Wherefore, if meat causes my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble" (ASV). This is the answer of love, the answer of superlative Christianity. And so can be seen the superiority of love over knowledge.

How the principle does apply to like matters in our day! It has peculiar fitness in application to the controversy that raged so fiercely a few years ago between liberal and conservative in the realm of religion, and still flares up now and then and here and there. In the heat of the contention the conservative, standing on the ground of revealed knowledge substantiated by rock and papyrus, hurled at liberals the epithets "Radicals! . . . Heretics! . . . Destroyers of the faith!" At the same time the liberal, from his ground of knowledge gleaned from test tube and microscope, retaliated with the vituperative terms "Traditionalists . . . Empty-headed bigots! . . . Organized forces of stupidity and ignorance!" From both camps, on the low ground of knowledge unseasoned by love, you could almost hear the serpent's hiss at times! If only the contenders on both sides could have

risen from the low ground of things they thought they knew to the high ground of love, how quickly the controversy would have come to an end! It would be so in all matters of similar character.

We need not, we must not, minimize or neglect knowledge in the Christian kingdom and in human relationships. We need only to associate, to saturate, knowledge with love; for "If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (I Corinthians 13:2, ASV).

III

The third Christian principle that Paul brings to bear upon the subject is the superiority of *right* over *rights*. The principle, more by implication than by direct statement, runs through both of the chapters cited. "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God" (Romans 14:19f). "We know that an idol is nothing in the world. . . . But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. . . . And through your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died. But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ" (I Corinthians 8:4ff). Look at the words that lie on the side of mere rights—"wound," "destroy," "sin," "perish"; and on the side of right—"peace," "edify."

Yet rights are precious possessions, particularly "inalienable rights." And man may go on demanding and exercising his rights and the policeman will not arrest him nor will the law molest him. But Christianity of a sufficiently high quality to be called superlative aims at something more than keeping within the law and out of the policeman's clutch. Indeed, it is a very low type of Christianity, if it can be called Christianity at all, that seeks to do no more than the law requires. The law is concerned with rights; the Christian religion, with right. As a

citizen, a man may ask, "What are my rights?" As a Christian he must ask, "What is right?"

In my last year in college we came to the study of ethics in a course in moral philosophy. There the *summum bonum,* the highest good in human life, was disclosed. Significant were the headings of the chapters in our textbook, ascending in the scale to that summit. The first chapter was entitled "Do No Harm." Multitudes are satisfied with this negative sort of existence. The heading of the second chapter was "Obey the Law." The purpose of many lives is just to keep within the law. "Do Thy Duty" was written over the third chapter. It was a step upward—not merely the restraint of the law from without, but the constraint of the conscience within. The title of the fourth chapter was "Serve Thy Fellows." The summit was in sight. He who gives his life in service to fellow men, without regard to duty's call, often going beyond duty's bounds, is on the heights indeed. The last chapter was headed "Serve Through Love." "There is a height above the heights," Dan Crawford writes. Love-service is that super-summit. It lifts to the plain on which Christ lived. And this is superlative Christianity.

"Is there a record in the New Testament of Jesus at any time standing on His rights? He was Creator and rightful Owner of the universe, and yet lived in the world, with no place to lay His head, without a single murmur that His rights were denied him. . . . If He had spoken like men of our day, He would have demanded the bishopric of Jerusalem as His right; but He appeared humbly in the synagogues to teach the people until He was denied even these—and still never a word of His ignored rights." [3]

This wise editor goes on to point out the manifest concern of the Apostles for their rights. James and John were not slow to press claims for what they considered their rights. They were joined in this effort by their mother, "who, impelled by sincere affection, however misguided it was, wanted her sons to have their just due in the kingdom." Peter, speaking for the whole group, as he often did, showed the same spirit when he said, "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee; what shall we

have therefore?" (Matthew 19:17). The concern of the Apostles for their rights led them on more than occasion to dispute and contend with one another, conduct utterly inconsistent with superlative Christianity.

The world is clamorous today with demands for rights in the different realms, political, industrial, even religious; and the result is always dispute and contention, if not worse. This or that nation wants its "place in the sun," so there is war or threat of war. Different industrial groups are determined to have their rights; consequently there are bickerings and strife, often suffering and loss, sometimes destruction and death. Even in the churches there is manifested sometimes more concern for rights than for righteousness.

Peter and John and their companions finally caught the vision of better things than self-interest and self-seeking in the kingdom. The editor quoted above said further of them: "The word 'right' still clung in their vocabulary, but it had altogether a different significance. When the civil court had threatened them and commanded them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, they were able to retort: 'Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.' Instead of contending with unseemly strife for their rights, they were ready to do right at any cost. It was the better, the higher, the holier viewpoint; and, if we but had the vision which the apostles had caught, many of our supposed rights would sink out of sight in the effort to do what is right." [3]

How the world needs today men with enough vision to see the superiority of right over rights, and with enough of the grace of God in their hearts to make that vision the controlling principle of their lives!

IV

The other principle which Paul brought to bear on the question of rights is that of the final judgment. In Romans 14:10 he says, "Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

The primal, basic fact of human accountability to God should be kept ever in mind. Nothing is more wholesome for human meditation and nothing better disciplines human nature than the remembrance of this answerability to God. It is not a fashionable fact in our day. It is not a popular thought. To talk much about it is held an impropriety. It is shunned even in the pulpit. Some people in this ultramodern world scoff at the thought, others minimize its importance as a principle upon which to build life, and still others ignore it. These attitudes have doubtless had much to do with the orgy of low-flung living we see on every hand.

But Jesus did not ignore it or minimize its importance. He knew its potent influence as a regulator of human conduct and adjuster of human relationships. He often set it forth in His teachings, particularly in His parables. Paul was equally aware of its bearing on human character and conduct, and therefore did not fail to warn men, most pointedly in II Corinthians 5:10: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad." A great failure in our day consists of not following the example of our Lord and of Paul in this matter. How wise we would be if we continually "brought the solemnities of the final account to bear on the marketplace and the meal"!

What has the final judgment to do with the matter of meats? You will get some understanding of the bearing of that judgment on this matter if you imagine as standing before the Judge the man who is tired of his weak brother; or the man who says, "I know that no idol is anything in the world, that nothing is unclean of itself, therefore I'll eat what I please and let others look out for themselves"; or the man who has used the liberty of his knowledge for an occasion to the flesh, and through whose knowledge the weak brother for whom Christ died perished! Imagine these men standing to be judged by Jesus, Who "pleased not Himself" but gave Himself a ransom for many, Who for our sake emptied Himself of heavenly prerogatives and on earth humbled Himself to the death of the cross!

In this way not only will we get some conception of the bearing the final judgment has upon affairs of daily conduct, but we will also receive some impulse toward joining Paul in his superlatively Christian determination: "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

The first lines of Bernard of Cluny's great poem "De Contemptu Mundi," from which some of our great hymns are taken, including the familiar one "Jerusalem the Golden," may well be remembered in this connection:

> The world is very evil,
> The times are waxing late;
> Be sober and keep vigil,
> The Judge is at the gate—
> The Judge that comes in mercy,
> The Judge that comes with might,
> To terminate the evil,
> To diadem the right.

Part Four

Crucified With Christ

Chapter VII The Mind of Christ
Chapter VIII Living Christ

The marks of the superlative Christian described in Part Four not only fit into the final picture Paul draws of the crucified man, but fill out the whole composite picture. Having the mind of Christ approaches, and living Christ completes, the achievement that above all is worthy of the tribute "crucified with Christ!"

Chapter VII

The Mind of Christ

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

In this verse is found the climax of Paul's appeals. In it is found also that which is close to the climax of human achievement. Whoever has in himself, to his fullest capacity, the mind of Christ is all but on the pinnacle peak itself. In the range of human experience there is only one peak above him. That peak we shall find in the next chapter.

In the verses following his appeal that men have in themselves the mind of Christ, Paul reveals what he conceives that mind to be, and what God thought of the full expression of it in action. "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus; Who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He stumbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yes, the death of the cross. Wherefore God also highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name that is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on the earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:55ff, ASV).

Paul's revelation of the mind of Christ and the thought of God we can take with full assurance. Let us try to see what this revelation is. Into the passage just quoted, Paul put his conception of the humiliation and the consequent glorification of the Son of God. Here we have in brief compass the most complete statement of the *incarnation* and *exaltation* of Jesus, with all which those two terms include and imply. The two actions are contrasted—the coming down and the lifting up, the humbling of self and the exaltation by the Father.

I

In considering the descent, let us look first at the height from which Jesus came down. Note the two expressions "existing in the form of God" and "being on an equality with God." With these expressions Paul scales the same lofty heights to which John soars as he begins his matchless gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Paul echoes here the thought that is in the words of Jesus to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58); and in his prayer to the Father (John 17:5), "The glory which I had with Thee before the world was." Paul's expressions, as do those of Jesus and John, carry us back beyond Bethlehem to our Lord's pre-existent equality with the Father in the eternity that is before time. That pre-existent deity gives worth and meaning to His infinite sacrifice in the incarnation.

Paul's careful selection of words, so evident here, gives emphasis to the pre-existent deity of Jesus. He says, "Form of God . . . likeness of men . . . in fashion as a man." The word "form" carries the idea of fixedness and permanence; the other two words suggest the accidental, the fleeting, the unsubstantial. Inner essence is in the first, only outward appearance in the other two. Dr. Maclaren says, "Only God can be 'in the form of God.' Man is made in the likeness of God, but not 'in the form of God.'" [1]

Such is the height from which Jesus came down—the essential form of God, co-equality with God in all the divine attributes. All the power God had, He had. All the glory God had, He had. All that God was, He was. Coming down from such a height is "the most stupendous instance of condescension in the world's history."

Look at the depths to which He came—the likeness of men and the place of a servant, then on down to the shameful death of the cross. Prophecy had foretold these depths: "He was despised and rejected of men . . . stricken . . . bruised . . . oppressed . . . brought as a lamb to the slaughter . . . cut off from the land of the living . . . His grave with the wicked" (Isaiah 53:3ff).

The records of fulfillment say: "The captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first. . . . Annas sent Him bound unto Caiphas the high priest. . . . Then led they Jesus unto Pilate. . . . Pilate said: 'Will ye that I release unto you Barabbas?' . . . Then cried they all, saying, 'Not this man, but Barabbas.' . . . Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. . . . The chief priests . . . cried out, saying, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him.' The Jews cried out, saying, 'Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him.' Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him away . . . into a place called . . . in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified Him" (John 18:ff).

Paul's picture of the "wondrous act of descent" contains three expressions that challenge our closest attention. The first, as translated in the King James Version, is "thought it not robbery to be equal with God"; as translated in the American Revised Version, "counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped." The word Paul used, translated as "robbery" in the one version and "a thing to be grasped" in the other, comes from a verb meaning "to seize upon, snatch away." The substantive form in which it appears here means "the thing seized upon or snatched away." It may therefore be translated as "robbery." In being equal with God, Christ was not robbing Him of glory and majesty and power in any way.

But the real meaning is more nearly given in the later translations. The Revised Standard Version follows substantially the translation of the American Revised Version—"did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped." Weymouth and Goodspeed also use the word "grasp." Moffatt translates, "He did not snatch at equality with God"; the *Twentieth Century New Testament,* "He did not look upon equality with God as above all things to be clung to"; Mrs. Montgomery, "did not reckon equality with God something to be forcibly retained."

The passage is admittedly difficult, but from the many translations we can get some conception of the meaning. The Son did not count equality with the Father a thing to be snatched at greedily, laid hold of with violent hands and clung to with tenacious, deathlike grip, as the miser clings to his gold. The essence of the passage seems to be that Jesus did not make His equality with God a means of gain for Himself, did not take advantage of it, did not use it selfishly at all.

But "He emptied Himself." This is the second of the challenging expressions. He emptied Himself, "not of the God-head, but of its manifestations, its glories," someone has said; "of the exercise and enjoyment of divine attributes," another says. What He emptied Himself of is best indicated by His own words in the prayer uttered just before He went into the garden, whence He went to trial and death: "Now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:5).

The other challenging expression which Paul uses here of Jesus is "He humbled Himself." He gave up the form of God to take the likeness of men. Being born as a man was His "supreme act of condescension," one of the world's great preachers has said. Was not becoming a man through the gates of human birth self-abasement enough for the Son of God, Who was pre-existent and co-equal with the Father? Nay, He must needs touch the depths by subjecting Himself to death, the death of the cross.

The purpose of His coming down alone explains and justifies the act. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him . . . and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah

53:7f). "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness" (I Peter 2:24). He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

The surpassing wonder of the "wondrous act of descent" lies in the fact that it was altogether voluntary. It was indeed self-abasement. Verily He emptied Himself and humbled Himself. "I lay down My life. . . . No man taketh from Me, but I lay it down of Myself" (John 10:17f).

Two meaningful words come out of all this as practical suggestions for us, or, rather, as suggestions for our practice in living. The words are "self-control" and "self-denial." They are good New Testament words. "Self-control" comes from Paul, "self-denial" from Jesus.

The last generation made a sorry spectacle of itself in its efforts to put its own pet words "self-realization" and "self-expression" in the place of these great New Testament words. That generation, it seems, wanted the restraints out of the way so that it could let go in enjoyment of all the gadgets that had been produced for easy and comfortable living. (One wonders sometimes if this present generation has not increased rather than decreased the "yen" and tempo along these lines). But self-control and self-denial, the essentials of real discipleship of Jesus, stood in the way. Therefore they were replaced by self-realization and self-expression. And the people ran riot in a laxity that brought depression, both moral and material, almost beyond anything yet seen. A modern poet exposed this folly when in the midst of the apostasy he wrote:

I saw a brazen thing,
With carmined cheek,
And mercerized leg
Draped over the arm
Of her easy chair,
Yapping about self-expression.
Bah!

The wild asses of the desert,
And the chittering hyenas
Have self-expression
In full measure,
And they remain
Asses and hyenas;
While man through self-denial
Has attained some semblance
Of the divine.[2]

Who can measure the significance of these two New Testament words in regard to the essence and to the most effective expression of the Christian religion? Take self-control. What an achievement it is—primal, fundamental in life! Mary Lineback writes of the "Mount of Victory." [3] It stood apart from the lowlier peaks. About its base was a great wall with one portal, a mystical gate through which only those could pass who had conquered the many monsters that haunted the plain before the mount. One came, Prince Nahad, who, despite the monsters, quickly reached the gate and demanded entrance as a reward. When immediate admittance was not granted, he fell into a temper, raged like a mad tiger, and tore his hair, while the conquered monsters hissed in scorn. A veiled being appeared, in nature like the prince. Each drew his sword, and the conflict was fiercer and more terrible than that required to conquer the monsters on the plain. Finally Nahad's sword pierced the breast of his antagonist, whose disguise faded as he fell; and in the fallen foe the prince saw his own face and form. As the vision vanished, Nahad paled at first, then flushed with joy that "conquered was the worst of enemies—*self!*" And suddenly he found himself standing on the Mount of Victory.

Take self-denial. The quintessence of the religion of Jesus is in this word. Matchless among men is Paul as a Christian, and rare was his self-control. But the pinnacle peak of human aspiration is *cont*ained, and the pinnacle peak of human achievement is *at*tained, in self-denial. No one has expressed this truth in a more impressive way than the unknown poet who wrote:

I sought from Socrates the sage,
Whose thoughts will live in every age,
A motto to direct my life,
A hero make me in the strife;
And Socrates said, "Know thyself."

But to know myself did not suffice
To make me useful, good and wise;
I sought Aurelius, strong and great,
Wise ruler of the Roman state;
Aurelius said, "Control thyself."

O Nazarene, Thou Who didst give
Thyself that men might truly live,
What message didst Thou leave to me
That I might fully follow Thee?
And Jesus said, "Deny thyself." [4]

In self-denial is the nearest human approach to Christ-likeness. In our modern self-indulgence, how far we are from that likeness! Years ago I heard a prominent Southern preacher give in an address his definition of the devil: "Supreme intelligence, unyielding purpose, tireless energy, pivoted on self." He pointed out that everything in the definition is good save the pivot on self. If you take all good and center it on self, you have the devil! This means being at antipodal distance from Jesus and his self-denial. Satan is selfishness personified. Jesus is self-denial incarnate. Men can take the way of self-indulgence to the similitude of Satan, or they can take the high road of self-denial to become like Jesus. As John Oxenham says,

The high soul climbs the high way,
And the low soul gropes the low;

* * *

And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go.[5]

Now we come to the ascent of Jesus. The descent was His own act. It was self-abasement. The lifting up was performed by the Father. "God highly exalted Him." Man lifted Him up to the cross as the climax of His humiliation. Then God lifted Him up from the cross to His own right hand in eternal glorification.

The fact to be kept in mind now is that the exaltation was the act of the Father, after the Son had come of His own accord down to the depths. Vividly Paul pictures the Son voluntarily letting loose of the equality He had with the Father in heaven, emptying Himself of the advantages of being in the form of God, coming down to earth and the likeness of men, and, as a slave, humbling Himself even to the death of the cross. The self-abasement left Him in Joseph's tomb, which was sealed by the Roman seal and guarded by Roman soldiers. Just as vividly Paul pictures the Father then moving into action to lift the Son from the lowest low to the highest high. "He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named" (Ephesians 1:20f).

One can easily see in his mind's eye the picture of God waiting through the years of the Son's self-abasement, watching and waiting for the time when He could begin the exaltation. Though the boy of twelve was lost for three days to His earthly parents, He was not in thirty-and-three years on the earth lost for one moment to His Heavenly Father. Though His most devoted followers slept through the agony in the garden, God did not sleep or forget. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalms 121:4).

When the darkness fell about the cross, hiding its divine victim from every human eye and cutting off all human knowledge of what was taking place there, save what was revealed in the cry "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?", even then "just within the shadows" God was "keeping watch above His own." Though the tomb held His body behind the great stone sealed and

guarded by Rome's power, the Father did not leave the Son in emptiness and humiliation. It was then and thence that God "highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name. He was received up into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19).

Jesus went back to that essential form of God and all that it implied, to that equality with God and all that it included, to the whole of that which He had relinquished when He emptied himself in heaven and humbled himself on the earth. He went back to the same heights He had occupied before He came down, but no higher, for there are no heights above being on an equality with God.

Our Lord carried back with Him, however, something that He had not had when He came down. That something is of infinitely superlative and eternally blessed worth to us. That something I seek to set before you in its double aspect.

First, He carried back with Him to the throne of God the name "Jesus." That name includes and discloses better than any other word the "unsearchable riches" of God. It is a compound word, formed by joining the first syllable of the name "Jehovah" to the Hebrew word meaning "to save." Its full meaning is "Salvation of the Lord." The Jehovah and the salvation of the Old Testament are joined together in the New Testament in the name "Jesus."

It is his name "Jesus" that is above every name. Many names are given him: "Messiah," "Christ," "Son of God," "Son of Man," "Lord," "Master," "Teacher"; but the name that is above every name is "Jesus." He could not have had that name without the great condescension. He was the Son of God, Christ, Lord, when He came down. He was all that these and the other names signify when He went back to heaven exalted by the Father, and He was also, is, and evermore shall be, Jesus Saviour.

There is a deep significance in the legend about the first time that name was written on earth as belonging to Him. A Roman officer taking the census at Bethlehem wrote it. All day long he had been writing names as pilgrims came and went. Near the

end of the day he sat looking over his records, when a shadow fell across the floor. He turned to see in the doorway the figure of a man with a child in his arms. "I could not come earlier," the man said. "The child was born last night."

"You are at the inn?"

"No, we arrived late; the child was born in a manger."

"Your name?"

"Joseph."

"Of what tribe?"

"Of the tribe of Judah. We are the descendants of kings."

The officer did not look up. The world was full of the sons of kings, but only one king ruled—Caesar. "Your wife's name?"

"Mary."

"And the child's?"

" 'Jesus.' It means 'Saviour of His People.' "

The officer, with a slight nod of his head, wrote, "Jesus, son of Joseph, of the tribe of Judah," and closed the book. It was the last name on his list.

When He came to the earth, it was the last of all His names. When He had finished His work on the earth, had been crucified and buried, then God lifted Him to His own right hand in the heavenly places, and the name "Jesus" was above every name. It was a common name. He was not the first Jewish boy to be called "Jesus," nor the last. But in Him Who of His own accord came down to the depths that He might lift men to the heights—in Him God made that common name to be above every name.

The other aspect of that which the Christ in the name "Jesus" carried back to the throne of God is the power to lift us to the same heights, in regard to place with—though not, to be sure, in regard to the form of or equality with—God. "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Revelation 3:21). In addition to these words of our Lord as to *where* we shall be, John gives us a glimpse of *what* we shall be. "When

He shall appear, we shall be like Him" (I John 3:2). The word John uses here is not the word that Paul used when he wrote of Christ as being in the *form* of God, but the word Paul used when he said that Christ was to be made in the *likeness* of men. We shall be where He is, even with Him in His throne, and shall do like Him; but only He will be in the form of God.

In this assurance of where we shall be and in this glimpse of what we shall be, we have some conception of the eternally blessed worth to us of that which Jesus carried back with Him to the "right hand of the Majesty on high."

The practical thought to be taken to heart by all of us from all this is that it was only by the descent, the coming down of His own accord, the voluntary emptying of self and humbling of self, that the Christ won the exaltation by the Father and the name that is above every name; and that in no other way can we win the lofty heights possible to all men through Jesus Christ. Paul makes it emphatic that the glorification by the Father came in consequence of the Son's "supreme act of condescension." It is ours to come down to help fellow men. God will look after the lifting up, both of them and of us. It is ours to learn self-control and to practice self-denial. It is God's to glorify.

Part of a poem never widely published, by an aged friend of my first years in the ministry—his only venture into verse, so far as I know—seems to me to be entirely worthy, and equally fitting, as a conclusion to this chapter:

> By might of stooping Thou has won,
> O Christ, the throne of sovereign sway;
> Thy will on earth, in heaven, be done,
> As blazing suns Thy hosts obey.
>
> No more the Man of Sorrows—Thou!
> No more the Man of grief and tears;
> Thou wearest on Thy regal brow
> The diadem of all the spheres.

Thy descent brought the Godhead down
To lift our sunken manhood up;
And who would wear the robe and crown,
Like Thee, must drink life's lowly cup.

O Jesus, make us quick to see
The blessed sweep of Thine intent;
O Jesus, make us quick to be
Prepared for manhood's great ascent![6]

Chapter VIII

Living Christ

"To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"
(Philippians 1:21).

There is a poem that points out the different meanings life has for persons whose callings or circumstances differ, or who differ in disposition or character, and it ends with the question "What is life to you?" This question, if asked around the world, as the poet indicates, would elicit many and varied, even widely different, answers. Our concern here is not with the answers to the question that men in general might make, but with the answer Paul has made: "To me to live is Christ." In his answer we come to the eighth and last mark of the superlative Christianity he lived, the pinnacle peak of Christian living. Here is the *ne plus ultra* of human achievement.

I

We begin consideration of this last mark of Paul's superlatively Christian living with a contrast between him as he is seen now and what he was before he came face to face with Jesus on the road to Damascus. For more than a quarter of a century he has been in the service of the Master. What a change from Saul the Pharisee to Paul the bondslave of Jesus!

Then those who stoned Stephen "laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul" (Acts 7:58). *Now* Paul writes to his Philippian fellow Christians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you . . . because I have you in my heart" (Philippians 1:3f).

Then Saul "made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3). *Now* Paul says to the members of the church at Philippi, "God is my witness, how I long for you all in the tender mercies of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:8 ASV).

Then Saul breathed out "threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1). *Now* Paul breathes always prayers and praises for his brethren in the Lord everywhere.

Then Saul asked letters from those highest in authority that he might bring "bound unto Jerusalem" for trial and punishment any followers of Jesus he could find (Acts 9:2). *Now* Paul is glad that his own bonds have resulted in the "furtherance of the gospel" (Philippians 1:12).

Then Saul, with all the intensity of his able and energetic nature, was ready to destroy the work of Christ and to persecute His followers unto death (Acts 22:4). *Now* Paul says his one cause of rejoicing is that Christ is preached, through goodwill by some, though through envy by others. "Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached," he writes, "and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice . . . that . . . Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death" (Philippians 1:18ff).

What a change from Saul to Paul! *Then* he was a bitter enemy, a relentless foe of Christ. *Now* he is a devoted friend, even a bondslave of Jesus, and a bold and determined preacher of His gospel. What has made the difference? What explains the contrast? That light on the Damascus road, and the voice that said, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest" (Acts 9:5). It does mean something to a man to come face to face with Jesus. It does make a difference in the heart of a man to have his inmost self revealed in the light that is brighter than the noonday sun. It does make a change in the life of a man when he has had a real

and vital experience with the Son of God, the Saviour of men. In that presence, in that light, in that experience, Saul the raging threat-and-slaughter-breathing persecutor was changed into the humble servant who only wanted to know, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). How well the unknown poet has phrased it!

I had walked life's path with an easy tread,
Had followed where comforts and pleasures led,
Until one day in a quiet place
I met my Master face to face.

With station and rank and wealth for my goal,
Much thought for the body, but none for the soul,
I had entered to win in life's mad race,
When I met my Master face to face.

I had built my castles and reared them high,
With their towers had pierced the blue of the sky;
I had sworn to rule with an iron mace,
When I met my Master face to face.

I met him and knew him and blushed to see
That His eyes, full of sorrow, were fixed on me;
And I faltered and fell at His feet that day,
While my castles melted and vanished away,

Melted and vanished, and in their place
Naught else I saw but my Master's face;
And I cried aloud, "Oh, make me meet
To follow the steps of Thy wounded feet."

My thought is now for the souls of men;
I have lost my life to find it again,
E'er since alone in that quiet place
I met my Master face to face.[1]

It is wholesome for everyone, even the most devout person, to pause now and then and ask himself some soul-searching questions: "Have I ever met the Lord Jesus and heard His voice?

Has this change, this vital, revolutionizing change, been wrought in my heart, and are its effects being seen in my life? Have I asked with the fullness of surrender, as Paul asked, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Have I come to the point"—it would be better to change to the future tense, perhaps; for most of us it is still in the future—"shall I ever come to the point, in love for my Lord, in devotion to Him, when I can say in truth, as Paul said it, 'To me to live is Christ'?"

II

A high plane of Christian living is represented in these six words: "To me to live is Christ." May they not indeed be said to represent a rise from plane to peak, the pinnacle peak even of superlative Christianity? Assuredly it can be said that few ever reach such a height. Most Christians live on lower levels, levels which may be indicated by a series of prepositions.

All Christians live *under* Christ. He is Lord, and they are servants under Him. Some are far beneath Him, so far that the distance between may seem immeasurable. But this is the first level, the lowest in this designation. One is not a Christian if he is not under Christ.

A great host of Christians live *toward* Christ. Their faces are turned that way. They are going in the direction He leads. They are following Him. Some are a long way behind, just "following afar off," but they are following. They are looking toward Him and living toward Him.

Many Christians live *for* Christ. Some people live for wealth, some for pleasure, some for place and power, but many live for Christ. What a worthy and worth-while life, moment by moment, day after day, year upon year, for a whole lifetime, living for Jesus! This third level is a high level, so high that many who are called Christians never get permanently upon it.

Some live *with* Christ. They make Him their daily companion. They walk with Him as Enoch walked with God. They know the meaning of Paul's expressions "crucified with Him," "died with Christ," "buried with Him" (Romans 6:3ff); "risen

with Christ," "hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1ff); and they shall know what it means to "appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). A high level indeed is this. When one reaches it he is approaching the peak itself.

A few Christians live *in* Christ. All their thoughts and aims and efforts are lost in Him. They abide in Him. What "unspeakable" joy and security and peace are theirs! When one has climbed to this height, there remains but one peak towering above him in the range of Christian experience.

It is Dan Crawford's "height above the heights." Paul is seen here on that super-height. "To me to live is Christ." He was so close to his Lord that no preposition even was needed to describe their relationship. There was nothing at all between him and his Lord. Did Paul live under Christ? Yes, as a bondslave. Did he live toward Christ and for Christ? Yes, during every moment from his experience on the way to Damascus to his death. He also lived with Christ and in Christ. But better than all these, higher than all these, Paul lived Christ! Take away all prepositions, take away everything that might come between, and say, "Paul lived Jesus." "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20 ASV). It is a blessed thing to live in Jesus. It is a more blessed, and a rarer thing, to have Jesus live in *us*. But this is the height that Paul reached as a Christian —just the simple, unqualified life of living Jesus. But for all its simplicity, it makes and marks the superlative Christian. How few climb so high in Christian living! Once in a lifetime, it may be, one such person will appear. Yet many might rise to this height if they would. All of us could get upon higher planes as Christians.

Paul was neither a demigod nor a superman, that he should live the Christ-life in such a thoroughgoing way. He had all the frailties common to men. He made tents while he preached, because he needed food and clothes. He was cold in the Roman prison and wrote to Timothy to bring his cloak before winter. He became furiously angry in the high priest's court when smitten contrary to law. He had a grievous affliction which he called a thorn in the flesh, which seemed like "a stake of Satan."

But in spite of all this, he climbed the heights to the topmost peak and lived Jesus.

Ernest Crosby has expressed this thought in a striking way:

He died for his faith? That's fine, more than most of us do;
But stay, can you add to that line that he lived for it too?
It is easy to die. Men have died for a wish or a whim,
From bravado or passion or pride; was it easy for him?
But to live! Every day to live out the truth that he dreamt,
While his friends met his conduct with doubt, and the world with contempt!
Was it thus that he plodded ahead, never turning aside?
Then we'll talk of the life that he lived—no matter how he died.[2]

III

But let no one be dismayed at the loftiness of this peak of Christian living, or discouraged at the effort required to scale it. Divine wisdom has ordained the necessity that men must struggle in order to rise. Our Lord set His standards all on the heights, never a one below the highest. He knew that we would not be able to reach them, but He knew also that nothing in our lives would be more wholesome or helpful than the incessant and unending struggle toward the heights He set to beckon us upward as well as onward. One is made to wonder sometimes if the blight that lies on us today is not because we have been going *on* apace without going *up* at all. Particularly in this country, may it not be that the blight which has well nigh become a curse lies on us because life during the first half of this century has been by and large too easy? We have not had to struggle, and we have not risen. We have advanced, marvelously we have advanced—but in the material realm; little have we climbed toward the heights of Christian living.

Instead of being dismayed and discouraged, therefore, as we find before us these lofty heights, particularly this peak of superlative Christianity, let us try, rather, to find out just what it means in a practical way to live Jesus. What the world of our

day needs most to see is men living the Christ-life; that is, Jesus living in men. So we should not look upon this type of Christian living as above and beyond us, but should seek to learn how we can best make it a part of our daily living. At least we can get hold of some of the essentials of it.

The Christian life can be built only on the foundation of faith in God. Trust in God and belief in His Word lie at the base of all Christian living. But if one would live Christ as Paul lived Him, there must be faith "strong enough to control conduct"; that is, strong enough to lead to total surrender and full obedience such as Paul rendered his Lord. Out of my early years comes the memory of a declaration by someone to the effect that faith in God is of such fundamental importance that, given that in a man's life, all else will work out; given that in a nation's life, all else will work out; given that in the world's life, all else will work out. The firm foundation of Christian living is faith in God.

If a man trusts God and believes in His Word, then he will open his heart to the enthronement of Christ Jesus the Son of God. Acceptance of Jesus as Saviour and Lord is the imperative prerequisite to the Christian experience and Christlike living. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:11f). No man can put Jesus into his daily living who does not have Him in his heart. This is the old way of saying it. But putting it in the most modern terms would not change the fundamental truth. "Christ liveth in me" was Paul's way of saying it. Let it be said in whatever terms will best express the Christ-mastered life, which is the *sine qua non* of superlative Christianity.

With faith in God as the foundation and Christ as the "corner stone," one can build securely a Christlike life on this earth. It may not be the magnificent edifice Paul erected (how many Pauls has the world seen?), but in his own time and place a man can rear such a Christian structure that others will see and glorify God.

For the achievement of this end, two brief New Testament

statements, one by Jesus Himself and one about Him, must ever be kept in mind and the effort made to follow the example they set in daily conduct: "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10); and "Who went about doing good" (Acts 10:28). These two passages state best, in fewest words, the full mission of the Master to men: the former, the major part of His work; the latter, the minor part, subordinate and contributive to His major work. Together they set forth His full mission of serving human needs, both spiritual and temporal. These are the two elemental activities in any life that would be Christlike.

The angel said to Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17). Jesus came from heaven to earth to save men from sin. This salvation is in His very name, which heaven gave Him before His birth. This name, formed by joining together the Jehovah and the salvation of the Old Testament, means "The Salvation of the Lord." And in the consummation of this salvation this name became the name that is above every other name. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Our Lord's own statement in the home of Zaccheus, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," is indeed an adequate summary in brief of His great mission to men. Complete comprehension of His mission is gotten in the conception of Him as the seeking Saviour, for therein is included also the minor part of His mission. In His "doing good" He was seeking those whom He might save. In serving men's temporal needs He was most effectively preparing their hearts to receive Him as Saviour.

The Gospel records disclose Him as the seeking Saviour. He is seen in Judea going from city to city, in Galilee entering synagogue after synagogue, passing through and through Samaria and up and down Perea beyond the Jordan, in the north country

around Tyre and Sidon, in Decapolis across the lake; He is seeking the lost. As long as His enemies would let Him live He went tirelessly about on this quest. In the garden He was in an agony of prayer, so that His sweat became as great drops of blood falling down to the ground—seeking the lost! On the cross He died between two thieves—seeking the lost!

> But none of the ransomed ever knew
> How deep were the waters crossed,
> Nor how dark the night the Lord passed through
> Ere He found the sheep that was lost.[3]

Peter's statement about Him, while His body was in the tomb, is best understood when taken in connection with this thought of Him as the seeking Saviour—"Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit, by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison" (I Peter 3:18f). Does not Peter plainly say that while His body was locked in death and sealed in the tomb, in the spirit He was away on His quest for the lost? In death, as in life, He was the seeking Saviour.

One more revelation the Scriptures make, climaxing this thought of Him as the seeking Saviour. "Behold I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). This He said from His place at the right hand of the throne of God, which means He is still the seeking Saviour. In His life among men He was the seeking Saviour. In His death on the earth He was the seeking Saviour. In glory in heaven He is still the seeking Saviour. He is always and pre-eminently the seeking Saviour.

Whoever would live Christ among men, or show to men the Christ living in him, must manifest this element of Christian endeavor in his life. To be sure, we can none of us save men, but we can seek them out and bring them to Him Who *can* save. Andrew brought Peter. Philip brought Nathaniel. The Samaritan woman hurried to tell her neighbors, that they might come to the Christ she had found. So the primal Christlike quality

in any life is found in earnestly and persistently seeking the salvation of men from sin.

Underscore the thought of saving *men*. There are those who become too much absorbed in just saving souls for heaven, when the Master's mission and ours is to save lives for the kingdom here as well as souls for the kingdom hereafter. Moreover, the thought of saving men makes room for serving physical and temporal human needs in the great ministry of the Master. Living like the seeking Saviour means seeking the salvation of lives, including men's bodies along with their souls.

Peter's statement that Jesus "went about doing good" might also be taken as inclusive of His full ministry; that is, He went about doing good to men spiritually and physically. The two ministries are indeed inextricably woven together. The thought of the seeking Saviour brings in the ministry to temporal needs as a part of His great mission. The thought of saving *men* includes the physical with the spiritual. And doing good means serving both soul and body needs of men.

But the phrase "went about doing good" applies peculiarly to the subordinate and contributive part of our Lord's mission on earth, or what is referred to as His "healing ministry." And this serving of human needs on the material level, though secondary to the major work of saving from sin, is by no means unimportant in kingdom work. By His example in His own ministry He made unmistakably clear how important He regarded this part of His mission. Every Bible reader knows how large a part this service had during those three years as He went about over those lands, healing here, casting out demons yonder, helping everywhere. We need not dwell further upon it here. His teaching makes equally clear how important to us is this part of the Christian ministry. This teaching stood out in a striking way on three momentous occasions.

Early in His public ministry, soon after His baptism, He paid a visit to His home town, Nazareth. There, in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, He sought out a passage in Isaiah and read it before the members of His family and old friends and neighbors. He wanted them to know just what His mission

on earth was. He read, "He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Then, to them listening intently, with all eyes "fastened on Him," He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." How gravely important He considered the matter is accentuated by His every action. How can we overrate the significance to them then, and to us now, of the fact that of the six items listed as disclosing His mission to men, four concerned temporal needs, or, as we would say today, were relief items?

Later, along toward the midway mark of His public ministry, there came to Jesus from the gloom of a dungeon in Herod's prison a question of the gravest import. John the Baptist, languishing there in discouragement and doubt—"despair" is the word Dr. A. T. Robertson uses—sent two of his disciples to ask, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" The Master's messiahship was questioned, and that by the Forerunner! How did Jesus answer John's questioning of His messiahship? He said to the two men whom John had sent, "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." Who can fail to be impressed by the tremendous significance that is in the fact that of the six items Jesus gave to John as proof of His messiahship, five concerned physical needs, were relief items?

Near the end of His work on earth our Lord gave one more list of Christian activities. It was Tuesday of Crucifixion week. He was speaking to His disciples, to whom He had entrusted His kingdom. He pictured Himself as Judge before Whom all nations would be gathered for final separation, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. To those on His right hand, He said, He would say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom, for you fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, took in the stranger, clothed the naked, ministered

to the sick, visited the imprisoned." To those on His left hand, He said, He would say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, for ye did none of these things." Who can overrate the importance of the moment or measure the significance of the fact that of the six items Jesus listed as those that should determine the final division of men, all are relief items? Further significance to us, and to all who would follow Him in doing good, is in His identification of Himself with the world's needy. If His judgment is questioned, His answer will be, to those on the right, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these"; to those on the left, "Inasmuch as ye did it not."

Let no one misinterpret the Scriptures or misunderstand the writer. This teaching of the Master does not mean that salvation comes of good works. Salvation comes alone by faith in Jesus as Saviour. Neither must we make the mistake of substituting humanitarian and philanthropic services for, or placing them before, the major work of the salvation of men from sin. The New Testament makes nothing clearer than the fact that the primary Christian task is to bring men into a personal experience with Jesus as Saviour and Lord. Salvation from sin is the firm foundation upon which can be built up the superstructure of good works.

But both the example and the teaching of our Lord make very plain the large place that "doing good" has in Christian living. The Christlike life must be, like that of Dorcas, "full of good works and almsdeeds" done. Apart from your good works, you will not be able to make men see that Christ is living in you. He said, we must remember, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Looking at the earthly life of Jesus and listening to His teaching, one cannot minimize the importance of good works, or afford to ignore or neglect this part of the Christian ministry. Deeds cannot displace faith, now or before the Judge then; but deeds must declare faith now and then.

It was as seeking Saviour going about doing good that Jesus fulfilled His mission on the earth. In this way, and this way alone—seeking the salvation of men from sin and serving their

common everyday needs—will we be able to fulfill our mission as His disciples, and show to men that He is living in us. The extent to which we give ourselves to the complete Christian ministry will be the measure of the Christlikeness of our lives.

Let no one make the mistake of assuming that this will be easy. Christlike living is neither easy nor capable of being accomplished in human wisdom and by human strength alone. But two of His promises are especially as His rod and staff to comfort and sustain us in the endeavor: the first, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end" (Matthew 28:20); the second, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). In meeting the conditions for the fulfillment of these promises to us, we too can do all things through Him Who strengthens us.

IV

We must not pass by unnoticed the last part of this great verse: "and to die is gain." "Gain" means "something more, something better." Think of the gain, the more and the better, that will come of living Jesus among men! Someone has expressed the thought well in these contrasts: losing earth, but gaining heaven; losing bodily sensations, but gaining spiritual satisfactions; losing worldly pleasures, but gaining heavenly joys; losing all evil, and gaining all good; losing all loss, and gaining all gain! How much more and better is the gain!

To Paul it seemed such gain that, weighing the matter between life and death and being in a strait betwixt the two, he declared it "far better to depart and be with Jesus" (Philippians 123). That will be the climax of the more and the better—being with Jesus where He is. "It is a faithful saying; for if we be dead with Him, we shall live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (II Timothy 2:11f). To these words of Paul may be added the "blessed assurance," incomparably glorious, spoken by our Lord from His place eternal at the right hand of the throne of God, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Revelation 3:21).

Part Five

Conclusion and Consummation

Chapter IX On and Up
Chapter X More Than Conquerors

Both words, "conclusion" and "consummation," are needed to characterize the end for the superlative Christian; "conclusion" referring to the way his life is finished on the earth, and "consummation" lifting the eyes beyond the earth with foreglimpses of the glories of heaven, and pointing the way to them. In the first chapter here we see the great exemplar of superlative Christianity coming to the close of his earthly existence "still achieving, still pursuing"—the worthiest conclusion for any life. In the other chapter, the last of this volume, we see the surpassing achievement of such a life, more than that of a conqueror, which brings the fitting reward of sitting enthroned with Jesus the Christ, even as He, having conquered, sits enthroned with God the Father—the consummation devoutly to be desired for every life.

Chapter IX

On and Up

"One thing I do. . . . I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13f ASV).

Living Christ in unadorned simplicity lifted Paul, as we saw in the preceeding chapter, to "the height that is above the heights." But we cannot leave him even on that eminence. Of Paul the question inevitably arises: What then? The answer comes out of the passage just quoted: "I press on." Standing on the pinnacle peak of earthly achievement, Paul was not content. Even there his striving did not cease.

I

Here is disclosed Paul's ideal, the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus." His ideal he found complete in the divine purpose, "that for which I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus" (ASV). "He took God's purpose in calling him, and Christ's purpose in redeeming him, as the great object of his life. God's aims and Paul's aims were identical. . . . Let us begin . . . by an honest dealing with ourselves, asking ourselves this question, 'What am I living for?' . . . Let us not cease asking the question

until we can say, 'Thy aim, O Lord, is my aim,' and 'I press toward the mark,' the only mark which will make life noble, elastic, stable, and blessed, that I 'may be found in Christ, not having mine own righteousness, but that which is of God by faith.' For this we have all been made, guided, redeemed. If we carry this treasure out of life we shall carry all that is worth carrying. If we fail in this we fail altogether, whatever be our so-called success." [1] This ideal alone is worthy of being made the one thing of life, as Paul made it the one thing of his life.

It is interesting and suggestive in this connection to note the use Jesus made of the phrase "one thing." To the rich young ruler He said, "One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor . . . and come, take up Thy cross and follow me" (Mark 10:21). To Martha, who was "troubled about many things," He said, "One thing is needful"; and of Mary sitting at His feet, "she hath chosen the good part" (Luke 10:42).

That which the rich young ruler lacked, consecration of his possessions as a part of his surrender to Christ; that which Mary had chosen, the good part of sitting at His feet to learn of Him; that which Paul did, pressing on toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus—all are in essence the same, accentuating from different angles the fact that the one thing of life, the chief concern of every man, is his personal relationship to the Son of God the Saviour of men, in Whom alone is found that which is worthy to be a man's sole, and soul, ideal.

The story is told that Raphael's great picture, the *Sistine Madonna,* was brought to Dresden, into the palace there and into the throne room. But no suitable place could be found for it save that occupied by the throne itself. The king ordered the throne moved from its place, saying, "The best place belongs to Him." The throne place in the throne room of the heart in the palace of life belongs to the Christ.

II

Paul did more than merely hold an ideal. He consecrated all his energies on the attainment of his ideal. All his abilities

he summoned in an intense effort to reach his goal. Let us note well the things he did in his strivings to this end. "Forgetting those things which are behind," he said, "and reaching forth unto things which are before, I press on toward the goal." The three things that mark the intensity of Paul's effort—forgetting what was behind, reaching for what was before, and pressing on—Dr. Maclaren puts in this terminology: "wise obliviousness, wise anticipation, and strenuous concentration."

III

It is important to know *how* to forget. Someone has said that God's grandest gift to men is the power to forget. Another speaks of the "art of forgetting," and declares that it has much to do with the blessedness and power of life.

It is important also to know *what* to forget. I have in mind a picture of the age-old foot-race. The runner must not waste time and energy looking back, or even thinking back, on the part of the course already covered. His eye, his mind, must be fixed on, and his powers conserved for, the part yet to be run and the goal yet to be won. Dr. Maclaren strikes the heart of the matter in his phrase "wise obliviousness." For there are some things we ought to remember. God's mercies should be remembered. Experiences that warn or encourage should not be forgotten. Inheritances, racial, national, religious, must not be forgotten.

On the other hand, there are many things it is wise to forget, things that would prove hindrances on the way ahead. Past faults and failures, insofar as they might discourage, should be forgotten, as also should past achievements if one is inclined to rest upon them. "We have seen men rest on their laurels until the wreath was moldy," someone has said. Another has quoted Lanier in this connection:

> The past is heavy and encumbereth me
> And hindereth me from sailing,

and has added, "Thus the past, instead of being a wing to rise,

may become a weight to sink. . . . The past that encumbers and hinders and clogs—let us forget that." [2]

This thought has special application to those who have passed the meridian of life. As men draw nearer their earthly end, they are more and more prone to turn back to, and in their hearts yearn for, the years that are no more. Paul was now long past the middle years, if not already an old man. But he shook himself free from the past and resolutely, confidently, joyously turned his face to the future. Let everyone strive against the inclination that comes with the later years to live in the past.

IV

Consider Paul's concentration on the things that were before him. Turn from his "wise obliviousness" to his equally "wise anticipation." When he spoke of "reaching forth" to what was before him, he used a graphic Greek word, the full meaning of which is hard to render in a single English word. Weymouth, with the American Standard Version, translates it as "stretching forward." But a stronger word, "straining," is used by other modern translators. Moffatt has "straining to," Goodspeed "straining toward," what lies ahead. But Mrs. Montgomery and the *Twentieth Century New Testament* make it stronger still with "straining every nerve." "Reaching out over" is the way Dr. Maclaren puts it, and adds that this phrase is the full "but clumsy rendering of the word, and it gives the picture of the runner with his body thrown forward, his hand extended, and his eye reaching even farther than his hand, in eager anticipation of the mark and the prize." [3]

One phase of the meaning is clearly a concentration of aim. Another phase, equally clear, is a concentration of effort. Leaving the latter phase for emphasis in connection with the pressing on, let us stress now that phase of the meaning that stands in contrast to Paul's "forgetting those things which are behind," his concentration of aim on "those things which are before," his "wise anticipation."

The light on the Damascus road, which blinded his physical

eyes for a little while, opened to his spiritual vision a vast and glorious future which thenceforward absorbed him completely. "The heavenly vision" became "the high calling of God" to him, and from that height he never lowered his eyes or turned away. Recall the striking statement Luke makes of Jesus as He draws near the close of His public ministry: "When the time was come that He should be delivered up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). With some such steadfastness of purpose Paul set his face to the way before him that led on in obedience to the heavenly vision. In his aim, all was centered on the things that were before him.

Does not wisdom for all of us lie in such concentration of aim? Is it not eminently wise, even considering life apart from the Christian hope, that we look to and live in the future? There alone is the promise of better things. There alone is the opportunity for higher achievement. There alone is the possibility for redemption of or atonement for past blunders. Always the best is yet to be.

For the Christian, superlative wisdom lies in looking to the future. How eternally true it is that for him the best is yet to be! To him, the future opens with limitless promise. Across the valley of shadows he can look with the most "blessed assurance." Someone has said, "There is an unspeakable difference between the successful worldling whose hope fails, and the poorest Christian who has a hope that 'holds within the veil.'"

Paul's ability to forget the things behind him and set his face so steadfastly to the things before him had much to do with the marvelous achievements of his life, with making him the superlative Christian that he was. May God give us all the wisdom both of such forgetting and of such looking ahead.

V

The "strenuous concentration" of effort in pressing on toward the goal for the prize was the crown of Paul's endeavors. Not only the industry but also the strenuousness of Paul's life calls forth admiration. He labored, he toiled, he struggled, he exerted

himself to the utmost, he drove himself onward; and all his activities were directed toward the attainment of his goal. All these qualities which so mark the character of Paul were clearly manifested before he became a Christian, particularly in his persecution of the followers of Jesus. He began in Jerusalem, reached out to the synagogues round about, and with letters of authority pressed on beyond the Jewish borders. His own summary of his course against Christians, before he became himself a Christian, best describes the driving power that was in him. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my vote against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities" (Acts 26:9ff).

The experience that so changed his life came on the way to the "strange" city of Damascus. Into the new life, to which this experience called him, he settled himself by quiet communion with God in the Arabian desert and by communication with some of the apostles in Jerusalem. Then he drove himself onward in the new life. He went to Tarsus, whence Barnabas summoned him to Antioch. From Antioch he went to Cyprus, thence to Asia Minor, by and by to Europe, Philippi, Athens, and Corinth, and finally to Rome. And we know from his own words (Romans 15:28) that he was thinking of going on to Spain.

VI

Paul's determination in going on and on meant much in making him the outstanding kingdom servant of the Christian ages. We have only to add another two-letter word to that "on" to get fully the secret of his superlative Christianity. The added word is "up." Paul went on and up, and it was the "up" that sanctified the whole of his aim and effort.

"I looked up," he said in telling afterward of his experience

on the way to Damascus and of the coming of Ananias to bring his Lord's message and bid him open his eyes. From that day Paul never lowered his eyes or his standard. A complete summary of his life thenceforth is in his simple statement to King Agrippa, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). And when the time for his departure had come, with one momentary glance backward—"I have fought in the good fight. I have run my course. I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7, M)—his face was again set on and up—"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown."

The on and up together, pursued persistently to the end of his life, best and most briefly sum up Paul's career after his meeting with Jesus on the Damascus road, and most completely explain his superlative Christianity.

The same career is open to all of us. May we let nothing below the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus become our life's ideal. May we let nothing less than the concentration of all our powers on the effort to make the ideal our life's great reality engage us. May the spirit of the Apostle to the Gentiles so possess us that we too will continue steadfastly in "the good fight" to life's end.

Chapter X

More Than Conquerors

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

One is greatly comforted and encouraged in contemplating the consummation of superlative Christianity. Paul, who lived the Christian life so well, put the consummation of it in the figure of the crown of righteousness, "henceforth . . . laid up, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give" (II Timothy 4:8). Jesus spoke of it as the crown of life which He will himself give (Revelation 2:20). Other expressions of the idea, setting forth the utmost in desirability and satisfaction, can be found in the New Testament.

The concept of the perfect life on earth and its consummation comes out of our Lord's prayer as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John. The Son said to the Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (verses 4 and 5). When Jesus said that He had "finished" his work in the world, He did not use the word that means merely "brought to an end," but the word that means "completed, perfected." When we look upon some

product of extraordinary skill and workmanship and say, "That is a finished article," we are not thinking of the craftsman's having ended his work, but of the artistry in the work. This gives some indication of the meaning of the word "finished" as our Lord used it here of His work. Such a consummate completion of His mission to men, on which the Father had sent Him, merited the consummation asked for, the glory which He had had with the Father before the world was. This refers to the one perfect life lived on this earth and its consummation.

The best expression of the final and eternal reward for the best in Christian living possible to human beings is found perhaps in the words that head this chapter, "more than conquerors." When we see all that is included and implied in the verse from which the words come, it can hardly be doubted that, from the human viewpoint and to the human understanding, here is found the ultimate in compensation for all that is required of effort and sacrifice to live as a superlative Christian. In this verse is seen the field of the conquest, the meaning of the conquest, and the means of the conquest.

I

The field of the conquest appears in the phrase "in all these things." These things? Read the two verses immediately preceding: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'" Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death! The list would seem comprehensive of all the experiences of adversity that life in this world can bring upon us or against us, including the last great enemy, death. What a field of conquest it is! In all these things we shall be more than conquerors.

But this list does not cover the whole field. Read the two verses immediately following: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor

things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus." If the first list is comprehensive of all the adversities of life on this earth, the second list takes in with one sweep the whole universe, and defies the powers above and beneath as well as on the earth to cut us off from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Though all the tribulations of life here below, though the forces of the unseen world, though the whole Creation should fight against us, in all these things we are more than conquerors.

Emphasis should be put on the preposition Paul uses. He says "in" all these things, not "over" nor even "in spite of" them. It is *in the midst* of these things that the battle is fought and the victory won. As the children of God, we may not hope to escape these things. Being the children of God in a world like this, and trying to live here as the children of God ought to live, may indeed array more of these things against us. But our assurance is that in the midst of them, sometimes even by means of them, we shall come to be more than conquerors.

An illustration which the writer once heard Dr. E. Y. Mullins use dramatizes this point. A pigeon was overtaken by a storm. The west winds caught it and hurled it into the east. The east winds battled it back into the west. The watcher said, "The bird will be destroyed by the fierce winds!" But as he watched he saw that the pigeon, using its wings with all its might against the winds, was gradually rising higher and higher as it fought, until at last it was entirely above the storm. Then, pausing for a moment to get its bearings, it took a straight course home.

So the Christian battles in the midst of these things, this fearful array of adversities and adversaries; and often by means of them as he battles against them, he rises to this glorious conquest. In another place Paul graphically depicts his experience of such a fight: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (II Corinthians 4:8ff). By

human perseverance and divine preservation we can thus battle in the Christian way to the final victory.

II

The meaning of the conquest is in the phrase we have made the subject of this chapter: "more than conquerors." May the Spirit Himself open to our understanding the full glory of the meaning of this phrase. Most men would be content to be just conquerors. And the world has high honors for its conquerors. You have but to scan history for a moment to see how the world has honored those who have conquered.

If we go back a little more than twenty-two centuries and stand on the shore of the Indian Ocean, we will find one of these conquerors. Alexander, son of Philip of Macedon, has become such a conqueror that the legend has come down the centuries that he sat down by the seashore and wept that there were no more worlds to conquer. History calls him "Alexander the Great." If we go back nearly a century and a half and stand on one of Europe's great battlefields, the field of Austerlitz, we will find another who is treading the ways of conquest. Napoleon Bonaparte feels a continent trembling beneath his tread as he strides towards his place among the world's conquerors. Short-lived was his triumph, however, for only a decade moved him to the field of Waterloo, where Wellington became the conqueror of the conqueror. Paul said "more than conquerors" !

But there are other fields, where conquests more worthy than those on fields of blood and death have been made. When Fulton's steamboat on the Hudson River plowed its way upstream, one of the greatest conquests of all time had been made. No longer would travel on the sea depend upon wind and tide. These things had been conquered. All men will ever honor their conqueror. Marconi worked and waited and waited and worked until by and by the ether waves caught his words and flung them across the unwired distance. What a conquest that was, we are beginning to realize as we sit in our homes, distances

annihilated, and listen to and watch the world at work and play. Down at Kitty Hawk on the North Carolina coast the Wright Brothers rose for the first time on a heavier-than-air machine and rode on the wings of the wind. How great a conquest that was, the world is fast finding out. Paul said "more than conquerors."

In still another field mankind's most worthy conquests perhaps have been made, as when Dr. Jenner with his vaccine took away the horrors of the loathesome disease of smallpox, or when the pain of surgical operations was made to yield to anesthetics, or when Walter Reed's sacrifice pointed the way to the conquest of yellow fever. In this field some of the greatest of all conquests have been made by some of the worthiest conquerors. Paul said "more than conquerors."

But the full flood-tide of the blessed meaning of Paul's phrase is seen only in the Son of God, our Saviour and Lord, Conqueror of sin and the grave. In Him the thought of being more than conqueror had complete expression. When He would establish His kingdom on the earth, His followers wanted him to call an army about Him, take the sword in His hand, and conquer the world for Himself and His race. But He would be more than a conqueror, so took the way of the cross. How much more than a conqueror He was, only eternity will disclose. In the garden, when Judas came with the mob, or even after they had nailed Him to the cross, He might have called twelve legions of angels and quickly overcome His enemies. Even so, He would have been only a conqueror. Instead He suffered the shame of it all, and when they had done their worst He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"; and He was more than a conqueror. It is glorious to be more than a conqueror. It is to be like Christ.

The medieval legend of the infidel knight may be fittingly noted here. He went full-armed into the open field, shook his mailed fist toward the heavens, and said, "God, if there be a God, I here and now challenge Thee to mortal combat." As he defiantly waited, a piece of parchment floated above his head and fell at his feet. Picking it up, he read, "God is love." Over-

come by the unexpected answer to his challenge, he broke his sword in pieces and, kneeling on the fragments, offered himself in devotion to the God Whom he had just defied. God might have struck him dead with a thunderbolt. But even so, God would have been only a conqueror. Instead He sent a gentle ray of love into the defiant knight's soul and won his heart to devotion—He was more than a conqueror! It is glorious to be more than a conqueror. It is to be—with deepest reverence let it be said—like God!

Each of the letters to the seven churches, as recorded in the second and third chapters of Revelation, is closed with a rich and assuring promise. The promises are made by the risen and glorified Lord. They are made to "him that overcometh," as we are accustomed to read in the old familiar version. But, significantly in connection with our thought here, Moffatt's translation is "the conqueror." The last of these "exceedingly great and precious promises" crowns them all, and at the same time both shows what it means in the end to be more than conquerors and symbolizes our nearest attainment of likeness to divinity. In Moffatt's translation this promise is: "The conqueror I will allow to sit beside Me on My throne, as I myself have conquered and sat down beside My Father on His throne."

III

We find the means of the conquest in the phrase "through him that loved us." It is entirely fitting that both this chapter and this volume should be concluded with our thought centered on Christ Jesus. May our all ever be centered on Him. In Him alone is the power for this conquest. Without Him we not only cannot overcome, but will *be* overcome. With Him and in Him and through Him we are sure of this glorious triumph, of being more than conquerors. The first thing men need to learn is the truth of what He Himself said to those about Him in the upper room: "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15: 5). The next thing men need to learn is the truth of what Paul said: "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13 RSV). Without Him, nothing; with Him, all things!

Paul's life is a clear demonstration of how well he had learned the double lesson. He said, "I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11). How could he attain to such self-mastery? Through Him that loved us. Paul said, "In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft . . . In perils of waters . . . of robbers . . . by mine own countrymen . . . by the heathen . . . in the city . . . in the sea . . . in the wilderness . . . among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watching often, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness" (II Corinthians 11:23ff). How could he endure and overcome? Through Him. Paul said, "I have fought the good fight; I have run my course; I have kept the faith. Now the crown of a good life awaits me, with which the Lord, that just Judge, will reward me on that day" (II Timothy 4:7f, M). How could he come to such a triumph? Through Him, through Him alone. How simply the profound truth has been put into verse:

I cannot do it alone;
The waves run fast and high,
And the fogs close chill around,
And the light goes out in the sky;
But I know that we two
Shall win in the end,
Jesus and I.

Coward and wayward and weak,
I change with the changing sky,
Today so eager and brave,
Tomorrow not caring to try.
Strong and tender and true,
Crucified once for me,
Never will He change, I know,
Whatever I may be.
He never gives in,
So we two shall win,
Jesus and I.[1]

Through Him that loved *us*. It all hangs on His love for us. In the two questions concerning the inseparable love, note that it is the love of Christ, the love of God in Christ, for us. Nothing can cut us off from that love. What a sure confidence! What a "blessed assurance"! He hath loved us. He is keeping us. He is loving us with a love that defies the universe. It is through Him that *so* loved us that we shall be more than conquerors.

O love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary self in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in its ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.[2]

Acknowledgments

Most of the quotations used in this book have come from the author's collection, culled from more than half a century of general reading, largely in periodical publications. The problem of locating their exact sources in order to obtain appropriate permission to reprint has been quite difficult. Credit has been given, in the Notes which follow, as far as available data permitted; and the author is grateful to the publishers in question—as well as to the writers themselves, for their fine expression of religious thought. He would appreciate information from any reader that would enable The American Press, in future editions of this book, to correct any mistakes that have been made or to give fuller credit where there is any lack.

—W. E. Goode

Notes

PREFACE

1. Scriptural quotations are taken from the King James translation, with an exception now and then where the use of a later translation seems to strengthen a passage or make it clearer, in which case the translation used is indicated as follows: American Standard Version, *ASV;* Weymouth, *W;* Moffatt, *M;* Goodspeed, *G;* Revised Standard Version, *RSV.*

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